IronWatch

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ABYSSAL TIDINGS

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Welcome back to IRONWATCH Magazine! This month we've got several stories, as well as a terrain tutorial for making your own board game tiles, the thrilling conclusion to Deadzone: The Cleansing, and more!

While a normal issue release is exciting enough, we're also incredibly giddy to release the Basic Rules for Quarantine! Using the underlying rule system of Deadzone's cube movement and pool-based die tests, Mike Tittensor has crafted an excellent way to finally represent your Mantic space forces in ship-to-ship combat. As with the Star-Struck City, we'll be looking for reader feedback for clarification, cleaning-up, and balancing, before releasing a Deluxe edition that will not only include art and stories, but tutorials on how to make your own ships from leftover Mantic model bits!

Speaking of the Star-Struck City, we will also shortly be releasing an updated version of this, including the re-release of the print-on-demand option! Moving forward, we're going to go back and revise older issues in order to both get the Ironwatch Annuals prepared (keep an eye out for Year One releasing next month…), as well as update them with the legal language needed from Mantic for licensing in order for us to offer them as print-on-demand options again.

Lastly, please send us your pictures, stories, and any fun game rules you've had a chance to create, tinker with, and try out. We're always looking for more content, and with the release of the Walking Dead: All-Out War, there's even more Mantic goodness to enjoy! As always, thanks for reading, and Welcome to the Watch!

--Austin Peasley

Cover art by Boris Samec
Title art by Mark Peasley

Contact us and submit articles at:
ironwatchmagazine@gmail.com

If you find any errors, grammar mistakes, or rule imbalances, please contact us on the Mantic Forums (Look for the discussion labeled "Ironwatch Issue X Feedback") and let us know what we could do to improve your fan-produced magazine. If you are interested in writing, illustrating, or editing for our magazine, please let us know on the feedback discussion as well so you can get in on the action!

All models used in this publication are from the respective author's own personal collections, and any models displayed herein are not intended to challenge the status of the copyrights of their respective owners.

This publication is completely unofficial and is not produced by Mantic Games. It is fan-made material based on the original works by Alessio Cavatore and Jake Thornton, and produced by Mantic Games. Mantic, Dungeon Saga, Kings of War, Warpath, Deadzone, Dreadball, and all associated characters, names, places and things are TM and © Mantic Entertainment Ltd 2015. Used without permission. No challenge to their status intended. All Rights Reserved to their respective owners.

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Orc Axes by Darren Lysenko

THE IRON FORGE

Welcome back to the Iron Forge.

On display this month for you we have:

- Geoff Burbidge with a terrifying Plague Abomination, and some fantastic paintjobs for the MVPs Dozer and Sann-Gar!
- Marcel Popik with some outstanding Forgefather Forge Guard and a chilling Abraham from The Walking Dead: All-Out War
- Loic Boudoya with an incredibly-detailed Dungeon Saga Troll!
- Paul Welsh, with an excellent Negan from The Walking Dead: All-Out War, and an entire superb Enforcer strike team!

Keep tuned in next month for more fantastic models, and if you have some painted Mantic minis you'd like featured to possibly become an Iron Forge artist, please email high resolution photos of your miniatures to ironwatchmagazine@gmail.com.

Please include your name and/or Mantic forum name. You can also provide descriptions of your paint jobs and titles if you'd like!

Forgefather Stormrage Veteran by Paul Scott

GEOFF BURBIDGE

GEOFF BURBIDGE

GEOFF BURBIDGE

MARCEL POPIK

FORGE FATHERS - FORGE GUARD

MARCEL POPIK

FORGE FATHERS - FORGE GUARD

MARCEL POPIK

ABRAHAM

LOIC BOUDOYA

LOIC BOUDOYA

LOIC BOUDOYA

PAUL WELSH

PAUL WELSH

PAUL WELSH

Town terrain by Andy Beckett

MANTIC CALENDAR

If you have Mantic-related events or tournaments you'd like to add, please PM Matt Gilbert or Austin Peasley on the forums or **email us** with your event's date, time, location, cost, a brief description, and a URL for more information.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and indicates where Mantic games are being enjoyed, not necessarily where Mantic will be making an official appearance (Save for the Mantic HQ, of course).

February 2017

2/12 **Red on Blue in Nottingham (ROBIN)**

From 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Tickets are £5, which includes an exclusive miniature!

38 Traders booked in so far, Seminars from some of the industries best! Demo & participation games, exclusive show figure, raffle & terrain competition.

Nottingham Tennis Centre, University Boulevard, Nottingham, NG7 2QH

2/25 **Digi-Con 3**

From 10:00 AM on 2/25 to 6:00 PM on 2/26

Tickets start at £8.00 for kids and £25.00 for adults.

Bringing special movie and anime themed guests, over 60 trader tables full of geeky goodness and lots of Cosplay!

Doncaster Deaf Trust, Leger Way, Doncaster, DN2 6AY, United Kingdom

March

3/4 **Hammerhead**

From 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Tickets are £5 per adult, £3 for minors (16 and under), Children under 9 free

Every game at Hammerhead is visitor participation, which means that you are very welcome 'to have a go' at a wide variety of different historical and fantasy based games run by intrepid gaming clubs, historical societies, wargame companies and enthusiastic groups of gamers

The Showground, Lincoln Road, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts, NG24 2NY

Dwarven Steel Behemoth by Dave Johns

3/11 **AireCon**

From 6:00 PM on 3/11 to 6:00 PM on 3/13

Tickets are £23 per adult for all three days, with cheaper options available for partial-weekend passes, day passes, and youth passes.

AireCon is a friendly and inclusive analog gaming festival in Harrogate International Centre. Whether you've come alone or with a massive group you'll find plenty of fun to be had and new friendly faces to meet.

Harrogate International Centre, King's Rd, Harrogate HG1 5LA, UK

3/22 **Adepticon 2017**

From 5:00PM on 3/22 to 4:00PM on 3/26

Weekend badges start at $25

We have expanded from a handful of events to well over 400 tournaments, event games, and hobby seminars covering all aspects of the miniature war gaming hobby. Despite the continued growth and necessary expansion, we have made every effort to keep consistent focus on one major priority: to present to our attendees the highest quality wargaming event possible

Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center, 1551 N. Thoreau Dr., Schaumburg, IL 60173, USA

Skeletal Dog Handler by Paul Mullis

April

4/1 **Teescon 2017**

From 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Teesside Wargames Convention, Eston Leisure Centre, Normanby Road, Middlesbrough, Middlesbrough TS6 9AE, UK

4/22 **Salute 2017**

From 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Tickets start at £12.00 online and £20.00 at the door.

Salute is the biggest independent one-day wargaming and gaming event in the UK. Our aim is to promote the very best in the hobby. Held at ExCel London, there will be the usual traders, with some from overseas as well, along with plenty of demonstration and participation games to see and take part in.

ExCel London, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL, UK

Lady Ursula by Peter Grose

4/28 **BrisCon 2017**

From 6:00 PM on 4/28 to 4:00PM on 4/30

Brisbane's Best Weekend of Gaming! BrisCon is looking to host a number of gaming competitions in 2017, and will host a Bring and Buy market for all gaming, hobby and related items. Kings of War is the premier fantasy wargaming system in QLD. Masses of ranked warriors battle, wizards and dragons fight, all in this superbly written rule-set. If you are interested, come along to our events on the 29th and 30th and have a go!

BrisCon, 68 Green Terrace, Windsor, Queensland, Australia.

4/28 **Lonewolf Tournament of Texas**

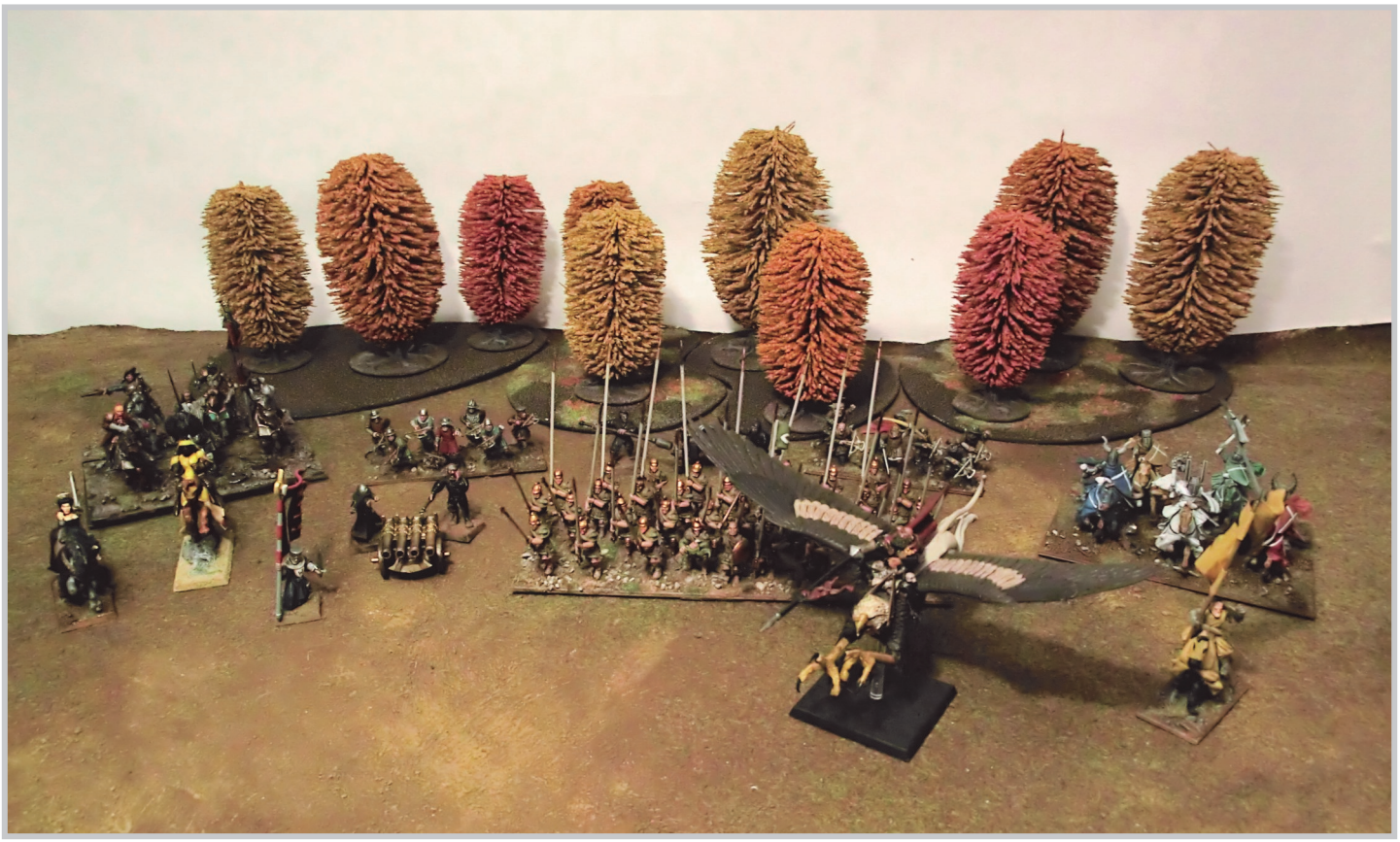
From 6:00 PM on 4/28 to 3:30PM on 4/30

Registration is $70.

The LoneWolf is a Kings of War grand tournament in the United States, with a rich history of epic competition, top notch players and some of the coolest trophies around. For more than fourteen years the tournament has been operating as one of the premiere wargaming tournaments in the south.

DFW Airport Marriot South, Main Ballroom, 4151 Centreport Boulevard, Fort Worth, Texas 76155, USA

Looking for an event, but don't see it listed? We rely on the Mantic Calendar for events, so please either coordinate your event there or let us know directly if you have an event you'd like to have featured on the monthly Calendar!



Kingdoms of Men army by Andre Kritzinger

LONEWOLF TOURNAMENT OF TEXAS

By Mark Cox

Lonewolf Tournament of Texas
April 29 & 30, 2017
2000 points 6 games (4/2 split)
Website: www.Lonewolfgt.com

Venue:
DFW Airport Marriott South
4151 Centreport Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76155

Player Capacity: 80+
Entry Fee: $70

The Lonewolf Grand Tournament of Texas was founded in 2001, and for the first 15 years it was a Warhammer Fantasy tournament. In 2016 we elected to shift gears to become the first Texas GT to run Kings of War. Players from across the country (and even Dan King the then COK Champion from the United Kingdom) flocked to DFW to support Lonewolf's shift in games. The overwhelming player support that came out to Lonewolf resulted in it being the largest KOW specific Grand Tournament event in the United States for 2016 with 64 players in attendance; a great showing for a first year run in an entirely new game system to our region.

For years, we here at the Lonewolf have prided ourselves in providing players with the highest level competition, unique gaming

experiences (such as custom made scenarios and a plethora of door prizes) and a large hall that gives a great Texas-sized gaming atmosphere. Everything we do, we do for our players. Knowing that we have players who may fly in for our event, we ensured that our location is conveniently located for our flying travelers. We selected a location next to one of the major flight hubs in Texas, the DFW International Airport. The DFW Airport Marriott South is an excellent venue, with freshly renovated rooms and near a variety of great restaurants and public transportation.

Here's some player testimonials:

"Got back today from an amazing weekend in Texas, I got treated to southern hospitality, y'all are amazing! Mark Cox, Jeffery Swann, Robby King, Sean"Rainbow" Bright Robert Phaneuf, George O'Connell and everyone else you are the best!

Lonewolf was probably best event I've been to, nearly everyone was chilled out and just there to have fun, but these guys can also play! The standard of play over there is top tier. Damn I played some real challenging games! *I came 12th overall and I'm pleased with that, 5 wins and 1 loss, so close to that Best General award! (just needed that last win!)*

What was especially nice was the number of people who came over and shook me by the hand thanking me and the Rules committee for all our work on the game.

I had amazing food, I got taken out for the best ribs and brisket, gorgeous 22 oz Bone in Ribeye, the most amazing burger ever! (I had a Sugar Burger!) And Sushi that was out of this world! Throughout Mark and Jeff and their families treated me with such friendship. Thanks guys!

They even took me out shooting a gun for first time! (I wasn't too bad a shot either!)

-- Dan King

Abyssal Dwarf army by "Dwarf Giant"

"I first attended Lonewolf in 2010 and was instantly drawn in by the camaraderie and atmosphere. I've been to everyone since then. It has since become the event that I look forward to most every year. It is a great competitive environment, yet laid back enough where you and your opponent can step away mid game for a beer. Last year I was there for the inaugural transition to KoW and it was the best year yet. I can't wait to see what LW2017 has in store."

-Jody Stubblefield

Undead Revenants and Ghouls by "Daedle"

My experience with Lonewolf from attending multiple years running now is that it has its own personality. I think of events just like I think of people, they all have things that make them different or unique, and some you like more than others. Lonewolf is that business guy that after work knows how to party! We all know that there are two types of business men, the guy with the pressed suite and ironed tie who is there to get work done, and the business casual guy with his sleeves rolled up and a few buttons left open up top that is there to be all over the place and be social at the same time. Lonewolf works great for both types.

If you're the hard core player that wants the hardest challenge there are more than enough people to test your metal against. If you're the guy that normally plays in a

Undead Zombies by George Adsett-Knutsen

garage with only a hand full of people.... you're not the only one, it's more common than you think. If you're the guy that came to drink beer and roll dice, you're in good company! The fact is no matter which one of these you are, you're going home having some new friends at the end of this.

My 1st year at Lonewolf I only knew 1 person since I had just moved to TX form California. There were obviously a few click type groups rolling around and everyone seemed to be having a good time. I just poked into some of the conversations and people were more than happy to include me and quickly I had new people to talk to, not just the person I came with. The number one mistake I see is people being too shy, groups will be more than happy to meet new people that play and love the hobby they do and will include you in where they are going to lunch or out to drink after the day is done.

Lonewolf is for me the closest thing to a West coast event that I grew up playing; where it just has the feeling of people are there to have fun, drink beers, and play games.... in that actual order. People from all over the country are always making the time to come out each year which means it's my chance to hang out with friends I don't often see and we get to catch up and talk about life as well as our hobby. Lonewolf has recently gotten attention from other country's and is now becoming a international event.

My advice is, if it's on your list of things you have thought about doing... do it! You wont regret it and you will end up with a new thing to look forward to in years to come and new friends to keep you entertained with the hobby.

-- Jeff Swann▪

Kingdoms of Men Heroes in the Star-Struck City by Austin Peasley

THE ORDER OF MAURICE

EPISODE 7: SECRETS AND SACRIFICES

By Ben Stoddard

"I was born under… unusual circumstances." Morticus began while Jephraim and Wilford leaned against the charred remains of wooden posts from the docks while Berns lay motionless off to the side breathing shallowly.

"My parents were not from this world, at least not originally. They were both from a world that was destroyed in some distant corner of the dark knight where the stars refuse to shine anymore. Their world was destroyed through blatant ignorance and audacious vanity yet somehow they were able to escape. The manner in which they did this was to travel through the realm of horrors. They literally travelled through hell in an effort to find a new home as theirs was ripped to shreds behind them." Morticus sighed and lowered himself onto his heels to stare at the ground.

"But before they made good this escape, before they entered the nightmarish plane, I was conceived unbeknownst to them. My mother was an elven sorceress, and my father was a human knight. Normally such things would never have happened, but the world was ending and they sought comfort in each other's arms and I was the result of that comfort. Something happened as my

mother carried me in her womb through the realm of death that eventually lead to this world. She still didn't know that she was pregnant with me and it was she who cast the enchantments that allowed both her and my father, along with their followers and allies, to pass through to this world, but channeling such a great amount of magic and the very essence of the hell through which they passed caused her pregnancy to have certain… complications."

"Like what?" Jephraim asked.

"For one it expedited the process. My mother gave birth to me only 4 months after entering this world. For another it had an unexpected effect on me as well. I have an affinity for the demonic resonance. This is something that I didn't learn about till much later, but I assume that it has something to do with the horrible realm being the place where I first began to grow within my mother's womb that did it to me. I can sense the presence of things touched by the Abyss, I can feel the pull of their tainted voices calling out to me, and the wrongness of their existence on this plain. Ever since I was young I heard whispers, taunts, suggestions, promises, all inaudible to anyone else but always present in my mind, as if something were trying to convince me to do things, terrible things." Morticus stared at the ground long and hard before continuing to speak.

"My father was the first one to notice that something was wrong. He found me one day after I had taken the butcher's dog and sliced it open from navel to groin and was picking through its entrails. I was only five years old and the voices had told me that there was a special treat for me, but that it was inside the dog's belly and I had to get it out quickly or it wouldn't be any good. I was looking for my treat when I heard my father's footsteps behind me and his voice call out my name." Morticus's voice began to shake and he took a deep shuddering breath before returning to his tale.

"My father was a brave man, I grew up hearing tales of his bravery: that he once fought off an entire regiment of abyssal fiends without faltering, even laughing as he did so. That he had walked through hell and that now the demons of that place feared him. The man was a legend in his own right amongst his troops and his friends. He was fearless. But that day I saw terror in his eyes as he whirled me about to face him. I giggled

Basilean Paladin and Elohi by "C.M. Minis"

because I thought it was all a game and placed my hands, scarlet with the dog's blood, on either side of his face and squealed with delight at how fast he had picked me up. Then my father did something that seared the event into my mind forever: he wept." Another long pause filled with silence enshrouded the small group as they sat listening and waiting for what came next.

"Before I was born, my mother was visited by the patron of our order, a Shining One who prophesied that if my mother decided to give me life that my destiny would be a great one but that it was unclear if that would be for good or ill. And so after I was born my father set himself to watch me and swore that if it seemed that I was falling down the wrong path that he would personally see to it to rectify my mother's mistake if it came to it. But then something happened that he hadn't hoped or expected. He came to love me as his son. My mother died in childbirth, sacrificing her life for mine, and for a long time my father resented me for that. But then he began to see little pieces of her in me, small mannerisms, the color of my eyes, even a similar sense of humor. I became a hurtful reminder of the love he had lost and while painful he felt some reassurance that some part of her lived on in me.

The Tyrant of Halpi by George Adsett-Knutsen

"This small admission opened the floodgates. He grew to care and eventually love the little boy that I was and convinced himself that the circumstances around my conception and growth would not adversely affect me. So thorough was his own deception that he refused to acknowledge the small signs that something was wrong. Little things I would say, the violent tantrums when I would get mad that often ended in violence, these things he carefully ignored and justified so as to appease his conscience. But when he was confronted with the harsh evidence of what was before him that day with the corpse of the butcher's pet at my feet and my clothes covered in the crimson juices of its body, even he couldn't deny that. And this broke him."

Goblin Mawbeast and herder by Guiseppe Aquino

Morticus stopped and pushed himself to his feet. Reaching over he pulled his glove off his left hand. Jephraim realized at that moment that the Captain's right hand had always been wrapped in leather strips and cloth which he had never seen him remove until this moment when the Captain started to unwind the animal hide. After the coverings fell away, Jephraim gasped at what he beheld: The Captain's right hand was completely encased within a shining golden gauntlet that shimmered even in the gloomy light of Perditus's dark afternoon. The metalwork was exceedingly fine with intricate symbols etched into the metal that seemed to glow with a warm light.

"This was my father's." Morticus spoke softly as he stared at his mailed fist. "Shortly after arriving in this world, but before I was born my father fought with a horde of demons that were attempting to take something precious from my father and his followers. In this fight my father was wounded by a strange sorcerous fire that caused his flesh to warp and flow like candle wax. He was only injured on his right hand, which was fortunate in its own way, as there were several men who were encased in this flame and their fates were much worse than his, at least at that time.

"Again the patron of our Order stepped in and fashioned suits of armor made out of Starmetal, a rare substance which is usually what draws would-be explorers here to the Star-Struck City due to its ability to hold enchantments. Our patron placed each of the wounded men in these suits and enchanted them with the ability to stay the

warping powers of the cursed flame. He then crafted this gauntlet with the same properties to stave off the evil energies that had embedded themselves in my father's hand, warning him that should he remove it that the powers would renew their assault and his body would succumb to the foul sorceries.

"When my father saw me that day with the dog he knew that his worst fears had been confirmed and so he set about finding a solution that wouldn't require my immediate demise. The first solution he came about naturally was that his gauntlet could stop the chaotic powers from influencing me, but knowing what that would cost he set about trying to find an alternative. Three years passed by as I slowly slipped further into an abyssal hole of madness. The voices within my head urged me to darker and darker deeds and I found my child's mind unable to resist the promptings I received. I did unspeakable things before my father had me chained to a wall and placed under constant guard to stop me from wandering about with my cursed inclinations bouncing about in my small head. Each day my father became more and more sure that there was only one solution to my curse.

"I do not remember the specifics, but I've been told that my father had me brought to the center of a cathedral dedicated to our patron where he had me bound and one of our Devoted priestesses cast the spell of unbinding on my father's gauntlet causing it to slide free revealing a terrible and mutilated claw where his hand had once been. Quickly they affixed the gauntlet to my own hand and bound it there. I do remember that at this moment the whispers ceased outright and my vision cleared.

Undead Ghoul in the Star-Struck City by Austin Peasley

Undead Zombies by Jim Kew

"I called out for my father, and he smiled even as his own eyes clouded over in pain and the cursed flesh of his hand began rippling in its new found freedom. It quickly spread upwards, consuming my father entirely. I remember the screams of pain as he wailed for the end. His close friend, an elven prince who came from the same old world and journeyed through the nightmare realm with my parents, he was the one to end my father's cursed existence. He stepped forward and ran my father through before my very eyes. Then he departed and I have never seen him since." Morticus raised his golden hand to eye level.

"Since then, I have dedicated myself to eradicating those Abyssal demons that I can and for years I have had that as my sole purpose for life. But within the past several months I have felt a pull towards this cursed city. Something strong has been calling out to me, something strong enough to reach me even through the gauntlet's enchantment and so I came here with the pretense of claiming a shipment of Starmetal for the Order, but in reality I had an ulterior motive. I came to investigate what it was that was pulling me to this place. Last night I disappeared to try and investigate further and I was drawn to an old tower towards the older parts of these ruins. What I found there terrifies me and was the reason for my haste to return to the safety of the Brotherhood's outpost on the mainland as quickly as possible."

"What did you find?" Jephraim's face was stone solemn as he asked his question.

"I discovered a dark ritual being performed by a sickly demon with red skin so dark it appeared the color of dried blood. He was chanting something in his infernal tongue which I couldn't understand, but it caused the gauntlet on my hand to burn with a low heat and my head to begin spinning. The ritual was something terrible as I saw the remains of several victims and a great sphere of energy pulsating in the middle of a

circular room where the rite was taking place. I found myself unable to move and as the ritual reached its peak I noticed the sphere grow larger all the while the heat in the room grew more intense. The victims' remains burst into flame and sparks of raw magical energy flew through the air. Suddenly there was a large crack of thunder followed by a deafening silence and absolute darkness." Morticus sighed deeply.

"When a few minutes passed a light flickered into being on the staff of the sickly demon's staff that barely illuminated the room, but it was enough to make out a figure kneeling in the center where the sphere of power had been moments before. The strange pull I had felt before started up once more and this time it was all I could do to keep myself from walking forward out of my hiding place and embracing this kneeling figure. I still could not understand what was causing this pull on me until I saw the figure stand and then it all became clear when I saw his face." Morticus fell silent.

"What were it 'bout 'is face, Cap'n?" Wilford's voice spoke in a dark tone. Morticus opened his mouth to reply but closed it after a few moments of silence. Surprisingly it was Jephraim who answered the question, and in his voice rested a note of sincere sympathy.

"It was your father, wasn't it?" There was no accusation, no anger, and no blame in his words. Indeed Jephraim's voice was soft and he shook his head in sympathy. Morticus's silence was all the answer that was needed.

"That's why they took Rigo, isn't it?" Jephraim continued. "He wants you to come to him, doesn't he? He knows you won't leave a man abandoned, because that's what he taught you." The Captain nodded slowly and rose to his feet. He walked over and

Elven Forest Shamblers by Jonathan Faulkes

stood by the docks staring at the gray water as it lapped against the stones and wood that made up the quay.

"I want you all to stay here until either I get back with Rigo, or the Brotherhood sends another ship to find out what happened to this outpost." He spoke at length without turning to face them. Both Wilford and Jephraim sat for a moment without speaking.

Undead Revenant King by Paul Mullis

"But ye cannae!..." Wilford began before the Captain turned his gaze on him and he fell into silence automatically. Jephraim on the other hand stood up slowly and walked over to one of the demon bodies with one of Wilford's axes embedded in its chest and pulled it free. Without speaking he slid the weapon into his belt and then stepped forward towards another demon corpse and pulled another axe free from its broken skull.

"What are you doing, thief?" The Captain's voice had regained its rough edge.

"You can't hope to accomplish this task alone, and you can't trust me to sit with Berns while you take Wilford and go on this suicide mission, so it looks like you're stuck with me." A glint of steel caught Jephraim's eye and he reached down to pick up his long bladed seax from the ground.

"I won't have you following after me and getting yourself killed." Morticus began walking towards him with his hands raised.

"As I see it, you have no real choice. You can't subdue me without wasting more time than you have, and I'm not backing down." Jephraim's eyes watered as he strained to match the Captain's stare.

"Why are you doing this?" Morticus questioned at length. "Not half an hour ago you were threatening me and now you're willing to risk your life to help save one of my men? You are no hero. I've seen you in battle, thief, you are a coward, despite the

show you are making right now. What is your angle here?" Instead of responding Jephraim slid the seax into its sheath at his belt and lowered his gaze.

"I have my reasons," he said finally ", and if we are going to catch that band of demons that has taken your soldier, we need to go, now." There was something different in his voice this time. An edge of steel that cut away Morticus's doubts. It was such an unexpected thing that the Captain had to stare at him a moment longer before nodding. Then he turned and picked up his own weapons and together the thief and the Captain set off at an easy jog back into the heart of the cursed city. Behind them a bewildered Wilford and an unconscious Berns shrank slowly from view until they were lost amidst the twisting streets of the Star Struck City. ▪

An ambush in the Star-Struck City by Austin Peasley

Elven Wizard by Jonathan Faulkes

LAPSE OF VIGILANCE

by William Buchanan

Very few understand the pivotal role that the Green Lady personally played in the event that brought the world to its current state. Never again would she allow herself to be a played pawn.

Shaken by the breeze beneath a brilliant blue sky, a drop of dew fell to the forest floor. It splashed the exposed root of a conifer initiating what would seem to be a lightning strike to any observer at the cellular level. The signal flashed upward through the tree, nourishing some miniscule fraction of its needs. But it also burrowed through the root and into the rich loam. From there it split and jumped across the roots of neighboring trees, losing intensity but gaining speed until it reached the eastern fringe of the Forest of Galahir, where she stood. She sensed it, and knew immediately the very leaf from which the dew drop fell, so many miles away. She knew its curves, its color, its weight, and the web of capillaries inside of it. She also knew the sources and meanings of a trillion other such unique impulses simultaneously inundating her mind: a continually bursting flood of information that had been there

since the dam that was the Fenulian Mirror had been broken. What used to be an effortless connection had been reduced to something more physical; more chemical, more strained. But while she could no longer raise a mountain with a single thought, she still surely could through a great force of will. While that leaf enjoyed a clear sky, here she endured a painful sight.

Legions of stalwart warriors clad in silver and blue crusaded down the hillside toward the battle line, where their brothers clashed with an ocean of demons. There, smoke and boiled blood mixed in the air to form a sickly veil, and even from up here at the edge of the battle she could hear the champions' zealous cries convert to screams of terror as they met the slaughter. It was a full tilt. For every man cut down, a monster was laid low; blood poured from the former, and liquid fire from the latter. Still, tens of thousands remained and the battle line, already hundreds of feet long, grew ever longer as each army continued to pour to the sides in an effort to flank the other.

In the center of the fray was the object of both armies' affections: a decrepit stone spire, tall enough to pierce the roiling gray clouds.

"Suppose you are mistaken. Suppose it is not there?" she mused gravely to the knight at her side.

"There is no need to entertain even the thought of failure, my Lady. The finest scholars in all of Basilea concur that it's there," boomed Dulagan, the Basilean general.

Undead Skeleton by "left64"

"Stowed in the most obvious of places?"

"And where better? It took us thousands of years to deduce the location, and it was our own ancestors what did the hiding!" Dulagan's voice was a mix of pride and anxiety. "Rest assured my Lady, it's there. Buried 'neath the foyer."

For the hundredth time she considered the implications of their mission. Oskan's seal had been broken with the mirror, so many millennia ago. Though what happened was purely conjecture to her, the legend went that he managed to retain the neck chain, but its two medallions had been ripped away

and scattered to parts of Mantica unknown, taking two thirds of his strength with them. Now, with the new knowledge that one of them lay buried under the husk of Alcadur, the world had been spun up.

They looked an odd pair, the Green Lady and Dulagan. One the portrait of masculinity, clad in decorated plate indicative of his standing, and bordering on outrageous. The other a literal half-goddess, long dark hair freely flowing over dyed green leather armor cut and stitched like leaves. It was odd, but this could not come to pass. She could only guess at what subterfuge had been required for the forces of the Abyss to learn the secret that the Basileans had uncovered, but the fact remained that with Two of Oskan's Three in the possession of the Abyss, Mantica would be a large step closer to cataclysmic unbalance. No, this could not come to pass. And so, when the Basileans implored her assistance, she acquiesced.

The chirp of every bird and the trickle of every stream. The gush of blood from every wound and the scorching of every blade of grass. A torrent of sensation, ever connecting her to nature. Never in these recent times had she allowed herself to forget the moment that it had begun.

In the Time of Light, Seira beheld the gleaming ivory monument before her. There being no particular crisis, she had made a leisurely journey here to Alcadur, the watchtower of the gods. Of course, most Celestians did not need a literal tower in order to view the goings-on in Mantica, but Alcadur served as a useful symbol. Located in the geographic center of the land, it was a common pilgrimage destination as

Elven Sylvan Kin by Matt Gilbert

A Basilean army by Paul Mullis

worshippers hoped to chance upon seeing the divine beings coming or going from it. One such band had made camp at the base of the tower, and startled when they saw the glowing form of a woman wrapped in shimmers of emerald crest a nearby hill.

Some prayed, some hollered, and some simply marveled as she strode past into the great open archway of Alcadur. Only a hundred feet in diameter and plain of décor save for some elaborate Celestian carvings that covered the wall, it truly was a monument to practicality and divinity, not opulence. She stood on the stone dais in the middle of the foyer, and it began to glow with a gentle radiant white. A moment later, she was blinked atop the tower, thousands of feet high. It was an unconventional method of entry, but a useful ward against any being that was not a Celestian.

The wall of the cylindrical chamber was a heavenly crystalline glass that gave a glorious view of all of Mantica. Inscribed in the smooth stone floor was ring of solid gold, a few feet less in diameter than the room itself. Dotted along the ring were many smaller circles demarking where individuals would position themselves once called to order. Three of them were larger than the others and adorned with colored gemstones. On these would stand the three major aspects: Ericke of men, Gendholm of the dwarves, and Seira of the elves.

Seira noted that she was last to arrive. Across the chamber through the mingling she spotted a lesser Celestian, brown hair over an ashen complexion and wearing a black bear skin as a robe. Seira strode over to meet her.

Undead Army Standard Bearer by Peter Grose

Liliana smiled. “You called off your hunters.”

“I told my people to temper their sport. Too many bucks were lost this year,” Seira replied, knowing full well where the conversation was headed.

“But wouldn’t you call that natural order?”

At this Seira had to smile. She’d grown fond of the young Celestian in recent decades. Liliana was also attuned to nature, though she had a particular preoccupation with the ‘death and decay’ side of it. Things dying and their mass recycled to bring new life was her fascination. She did not seek it or revel in it. It simply brought her joy, as would the secular focus for any Celestian. And so, Seira did not hold it against her. But Liliana had made a valid point.

“The behaviors of a race are surely natural. But I did not decree that they stay their bows. I implored their lords to consider the cascade of events if they were to continue. A loss of too many creatures upsets the natural order; populations of other creatures die off or explode as a result. The forest becomes unstable and those that survive will leave. Even you would not be able to enjoy the garment you wear this very moment. So you see, I did not give any mandate. I showed them what will be, and they changed.”

Liliana looked down at the thick bearskin draped from her shoulders, and began to reply when Gendholm’s voice boomed across the chamber. “Order.”

All moved to their locations on the ring with a grace unachievable by mortal-kind. Seira took her place on one of the three major pedestals. Over the next several minutes, dozens of minor Celestians provided reports on the condition of their portions of Mantica, be it a geographic region or a facet of reality. Eventually, the turn passed to the one called Oskan, who took the form of a well-dressed young man adorned with a particularly elegant silver necklace from which hung two medallions of differing size, shape and color.

“I have spoken with the elf Fenulian. His achievements dwarf those of all other mortals, and yet he cannot secure the one

thing he longs for most: his one true love Elinathora." began Oskan.

They all knew of Calisor Fenulian, an elven mage considered throughout Mantica to be perhaps the most accomplished mortal to ever live. His rumored deeds were fantastic: moving oceans, stepping between planes, and treating with dragons to name a few.
Oskan continued, "But I have offered him a way."

"Tampering with the fortunes of mortals is dangerous. Our place is to lead them, not direct them. Why would you do this?" asked Ericke.

"I took pity on him."

"Why?"

"Because we can walk the world free of consequence. There is nothing unavailable to us and yet I believe I speak for all of you - even you three - when I say that we too long for something unreachable. We will never experience the desire that Calisor Fenulian does, unrequited or not. It is the unavoidable consequence of our very nature. You know this to be true."

There was a long silence.

"I gave Fenulian the means to construct a mirror through which he and Elinathora might observe their future. Of course, what he considers to be 'magic' is but an empty wind without our consent, and so I seek your approval to enchant this mirror and let it display what is needed, if and when he completes its construction."

There was another long silence.

Gendholm of the dwarves spoke first. "I agree. There's fire in his heart! Would that I could trade places with him. Let's give all mortals a beacon of hope!"

Goblin War Engines laying siege by "SneakyChris"

Ericke of men spoke second. “I say no. We are to curate creation, not intervene in the affairs of mortals.”

All then turned to Seira of the elves, as if for mediation (although there was no precedent for this sort of thing). It was fitting that the issue come down to her since the subject at hand, Fenulian, was one of her people. Seira paused a long while, and then spoke.

“Look at the mortal’s intentions. He aims to manipulate the emotions of another, to thwart what was a very natural conclusion. Look at his works. Have his conquests gone to his head, such that he now dares to consider himself our peer? Both he and Oskan are out of order.”

Another long silence.

“What will be done?” asked some other lesser Celestian.

She turned to Oskan. “You have made a commitment to the mortal, and to undo that now is to undermine our very credibility. So, the future must be revealed to this him, but it must revealed in its entirety. Life, glorious or not, ends in but one manner. That ending and what follows it must be considered too.” Across the council, she noticed Liliana’s posture stiffen. “When Elinathora looks upon the mirror, we will show her the future, true and bare and complete. She will be educated as to the state of the world that goes on without her. Only then can her decision be one of balance.”

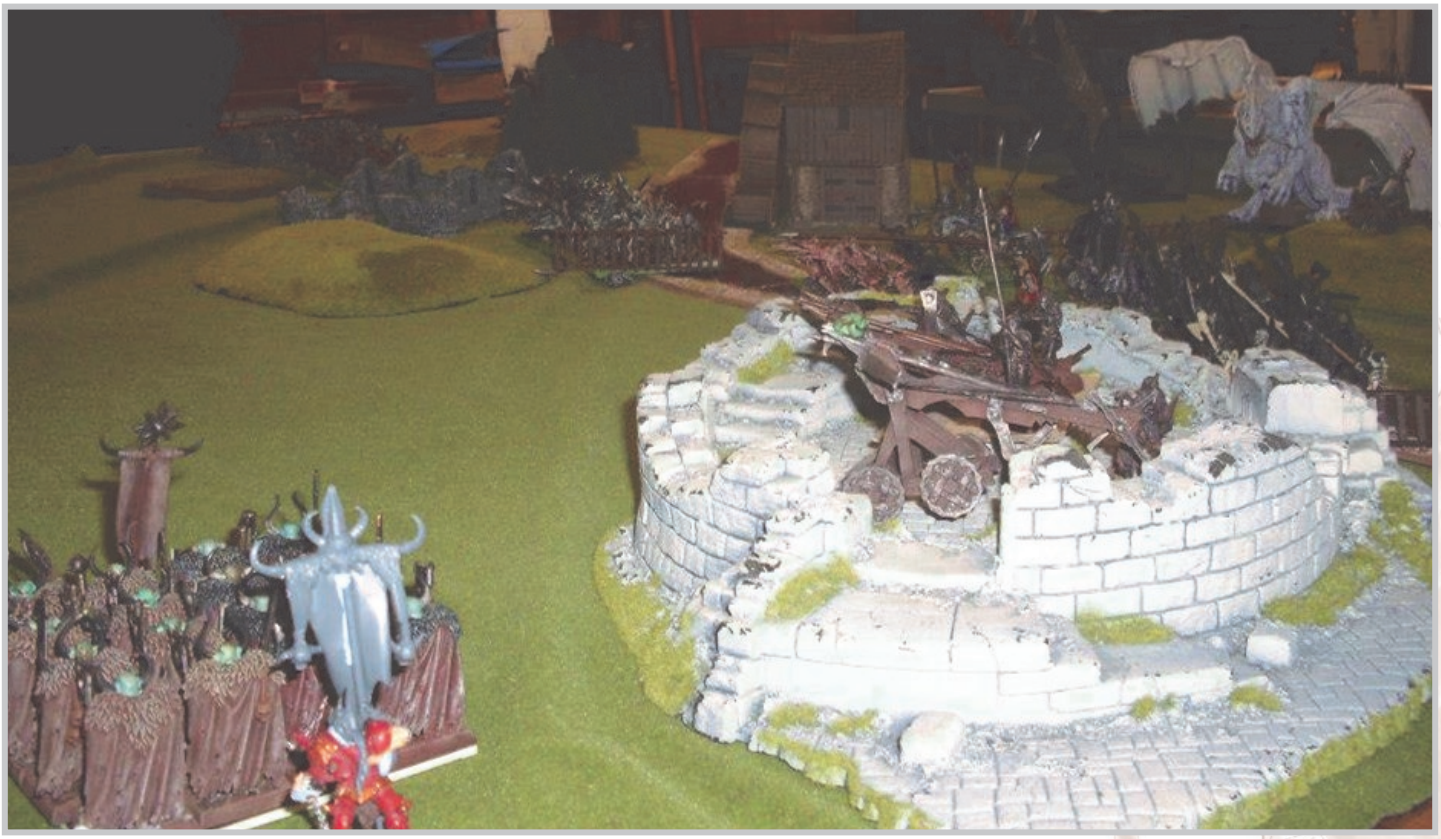
“Very well,” said Oskan. And so the council was concluded.

Ogre Captain by Taylor Holloway

But Oskan, whose aspect was time itself, knew that decades from now on Elinathora’s deathbed, a golden bird would perch on the windowsill and sing her final lullaby.

The remainder is well known lore. Calisor Fenulian did eventually harvest a beam of light from the Star of Heaven. He did complete the mirror. And Elinathora did look upon it. And while she was warmed to see a glorious age of harmony and peace, her delight turned to black terror when she witnessed the downfall of her family, a tragedy initiated by her natural passing and which would endure for centuries.

But then, that fear caused her to do something that neither Seira nor Oskan had foreseen, as the minds of mortals are fickle things.



A Kingdoms of Men army by "TSNC"

She shattered the mirror.

Dulagan's shield exploded into seven pieces, but at least the cruel head of the mace had been deflected. As the massive body of the roaring Moloch reared up, five knights who had spurred to assist Dulagan arrived, implanting their spears in the monster's chest. In a foot-deep puddle of blood, he caught his breath before jolting to his feet and back into action.

The fight had begun to sway when Dulagan and the Green Lady personally entered the fray. Cries of "drive them back east!" began to take hold. With every sword slash, felled demon, and takedown of their more sizeable beasts, the Basileans gained palpable confidence. The sea of black horns and crimson sinew dwindled to a lake. The battle line was beginning to collapse.

The mirror was broken, and with it the Celestians were rent in two.

But Seira in her wisdom had used that instant to reach out and touch the land. Through ancient channels she made her plight to all the world's flora and fauna, and they heard her. They offered no resistance to her influence, permitting her to inhabit some portion of their own souls and thereby establish an anchor in reality. From this tether, her consciousness remained composed enough to survey the madness around her.

Often, when mortals talk about glimpsing beyond the physical and into the realm of the divine or "supernatural," they recount

some profoundly mystical experience - an epiphany so strong as to induce tears, a vision conveying a lesson from another time, a strange sense of clarity, or even a conversation with the personified form of a god. But that is the realm where Celestians normally exist, and so for them this experience was comparable. Seira - and all Celestians - witnessed a tear in the fabric of reality itself. Every aspect in the room shifted and split as if their shadows had decided to forsake their corporeal bodies. Everyone but Seira. A split second later, the chamber disappeared from sight as all were drawn into a shrieking alien void. Amid a swirling maelstrom of disturbing colors that had never been (and could never be) seen in the physical world, the essences of the Celestians churned in agony. For the first time, they experienced pain.

Somewhere in the storm, Seira saw a dark swatch. It was no more than a black smudge on a child's chaotic painting, but she surely recognized Liliana's spirit. In a way that she didn't quite understand, she reached out – with her mind? her arm? her soul? – and attempted to secure it, but was met with a searing pain that caused her to retreat. Still, that brief contact was enough for Liliana to get through a message; not in words, but in pure emotion that Seira found herself able to understand.

Embrace me. No matter my resistance, please save me. I desire to hurt you, but I

Kingdoms of Men and Elves clash in battle by "WeedyElf"

Kingdoms of Men Penitents Mob by Andre Kritzinger

hate that desire. I cannot explain it.

Again Seira attempted to grasp, and again she recoiled as Liliana's rebellious howling splintered through her mind. Suddenly she noted that the swirling of the ether was slowing, and through some of the waves she could actually see glimmers of reality: a forest on fire, a storeroom collapsing, a graveyard in tumult, Alcadur decaying...she sensed that the storm was ending, and guessed that with it Liliana too might fade and be lost. Resolving every last particle of her being (or whatever "being" meant in this place), she reached out and wrapped her essence around Liliana's. Although Seira could not possibly make the following comparison, a mortal would say that the sensation was akin to bear-hugging a pile of liquid molten iron slag. Her final impulse was lament; Oskan knew what her verdict would be, and he knew that the mortal would not heed his warning. Never again would she allow herself to be a played pawn. Both Celestians screamed together in the anti-cosmos until pure blackness finally overcame all.

The pitch silence of the foyer which had sustained for millennia was finally broken as the massive stone blockade was rolled away from the entrance. Sunlight filtered by the overcast sky and then the fog of battle danced upon surfaces that hadn't been illuminated in ages. Dulagan and several dozen of his personal guard followed the Green Lady inside. Though the last demon had fled, the field outside was silent now in

anticipation of the real prize.

She walked slowly to the dais in the middle of the room, same as she had done so many lifetimes ago. With so few Celestians having survived to still walk the world, none had ever bothered return here since the breaking of the mirror.

Dungeon Saga Ba'El by "C.M. Minis"

Suddenly a startle cascaded through the ranks of soldiers as two thick vines crawled along the ground from the ground outside, making their way to the dais. The Green Lady looked to be in a trance. Like tentacles they coiled around the circular platform and began to pull upward with the sound of taught ropes keeping a sail in check. The Green Lady strained, and the stone budged. Over the next minute it was withdrawn, revealed to be a ten foot deep cylindrical plug, scraping along the circular bore in which had been installed. Finally it was removed and cast aside.

The envoy descended with aplomb.

Sure enough, beneath the ruins of Alcadur, the ancient Basileans had dug out a large room some hundred feet across, and on a simple pedestal at the far end glimmered a small metallic disc.

Dulagan and the Green lady approached it as the rest of the men gradually filed in behind, their accumulated torchlight now sufficient to fill the entire subterranean chamber. The medallion was three inches across, solid gold and carved somewhat to resemble a seashell. A dark ruby was set in the center, and the entire assembly crackled with tiny arcs of pink lightning every few seconds.

Dulagan let out a great roar, to which his men chimed in. They raised bloodied gauntlets in victory, clapped each other's shoulders, and beamed smiles enough to out-illuminate their torches. For minutes it went on. Dulagan personally strode through the ranks congratulating and thanking each and every man. So low were inhibitions that the Basileans used profane language to express the thrill of victory over the hordes of the

Kingdoms of Men Hero by "Daedle"

Abyss, and the acquisition of an artifact so precious to their evil god.

But in the fervor, Dulagan forgot himself. "Now we have Two of Three! Now we have him cornered! Mark my words, men, before we lie in the earth, we too will have Oskan's chain, and then your sons and daughters will tell of how their fathers purged the demon god from Mantica!" His proclamation was met with a roar of approval.

"What?" said a composed feminine voice from the back of the room.

Dulagan and his army fell silent and looked to the altar. He noted a slight change in the Green Lady's posture; perhaps a dip of the head or a hunch of the shoulders. Her irises expanded until her eyes turned solid green, which then collapsed to an oily jet. The intangible misty aura about her turned from emerald to ashen. Without pomp or circumstance, she picked up the medallion and turned to leave, promptly meeting a line of spearmen.

"My Lady, what – what are you doing?!" one of them managed.

The tenor of her voice had lowered drastically. "You will refer to me as Liliana. And you will stand down."

"Stay your ground, men!" barked Dulagan, who turned to the Green Lady. "We cannot do that, my Lady."

"When you asked my help, you did not tell me that the other medallion was already accounted for. You did not tell me you'd already retrieved the Third piece."

"My lady, we did not lie."

"You purposefully told half of the truth. And now you propose to create further unbalance in the world. I have seen this before."

For the first time in his career, Dulagan shifted uncomfortably. The eyes of his men were darting back and forth. "Surely you can understand my Lady, it was for the greater good. The greatest good! We will have the means to keep Oskan at bay for…for…well, forever!" He ended with an upward resolve

bordering on frustration.

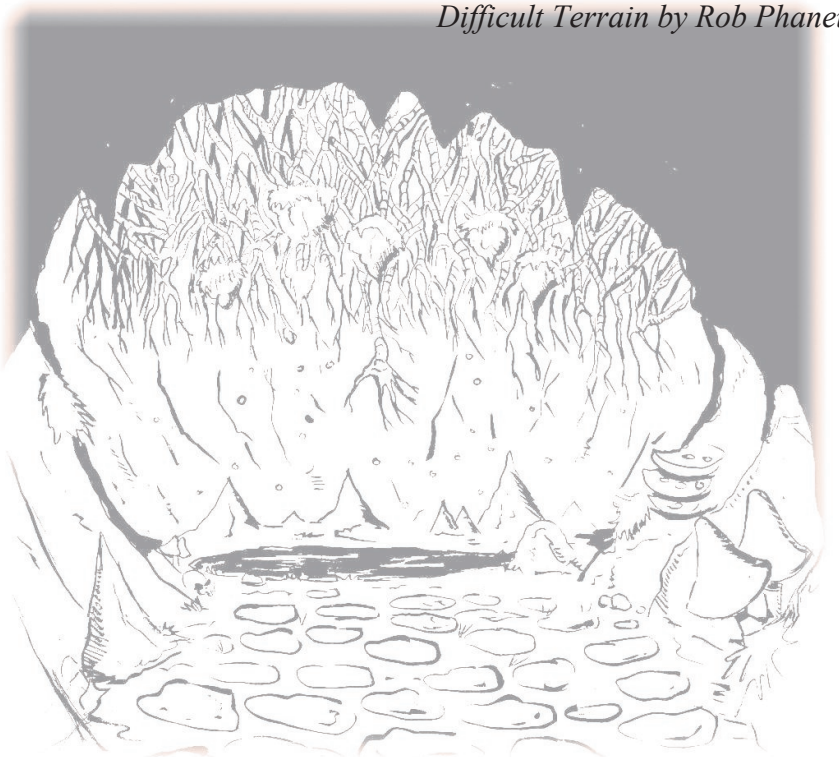
"You would hold a god hostage?" she sneered, an eyebrow rising sharply.

"Only…only those that would do evil!" the general stammered.

Enough. She mentally latched onto several clusters of the countless invisible strings attuning her to nature and surged an alien energy back through them. In several locations behind the wall of Basilean soldiers, the earth came alive in a most peculiar and violent way.

Never again would she allow herself to be a played pawn.▪

Difficult Terrain by Rob Phaneuf



GAMING ON YOUR KITCHEN TABLE

By Donn Turner

If you are like me, then you don't have a "Man Cave". My wife doesn't have a room either. So, where can you game, when it is miserable in your garage? For me, it is our kitchen table. However, gaming in such a small area can cause unique issues that you will never experience in a proper gaming area. Here's an idea that may help!

For me, war gaming is all about the cool miniatures and amazing terrain. The visual aspects in war gaming are not only fun to work on, but they add so much to the hobby experience. Immersion into your fantasy battlefield is vital. No one wants to spend hours painting up that one especially epic model, only to have to game on a bare surface, using books to simulate hills or buildings. It not only cheapens all of the effort that you put into painting your miniature, but it also removes all sense of "being there".

This all sounds great, but how can you have an epic gaming table when you don't have the room to store one? Using a game mat can help, but then you are using a flat mat with pretty pictures printed on it. There is no height or depth. It's just an image printed on a flat surface. This just doesn't work for me.

Making a modular gaming table can solve this problem. You can use your product of choice, and let your imagination run wild. However, when using modular gaming tiles, you are often left with another issue: seam lines.

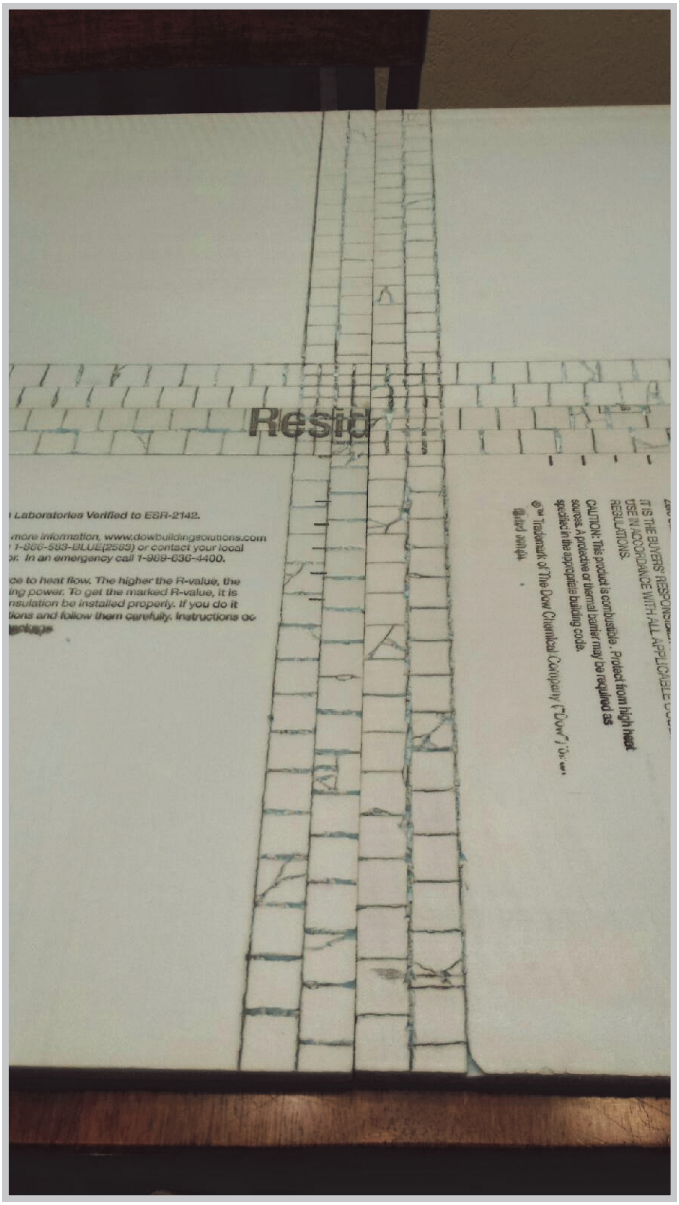
Seam lines occur when you join multiple pieces, or tiles, of a game board together. All you have to do is look at the amazing work

that other gamers have put into their gaming tables. Some of these tables look unbelievable, until you notice the seam lines running across the entire playing area.

It may just be me, but my eyes are immediately drawn right to the seam lines, and my sense of "being there" vanishes. I think that this is a shame, as so much love and attention to detail is instantly ruined for me.

So, how do you make a modular gaming table without seam lines? Well, you can't. But, you can hide the seam lines! Let me give you an example:

This is a picture of a game board tile that I have made from foam insulation. You will notice that I have carved out a broken stone path on two sides of the tile. When you join four different tiles together, you will have a game board that looks like this: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or. In an emergency call 1-989-636-4400.
be to heat flow. The higher the R-value, the
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package.
IT IS THE BUYERS RESPONSI
USE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE
REGULATIONS.
CAUTION: This product is combustible. Protect from high heat
sources. A protective thermal barrier may be required as
specified in the appropriate building code.
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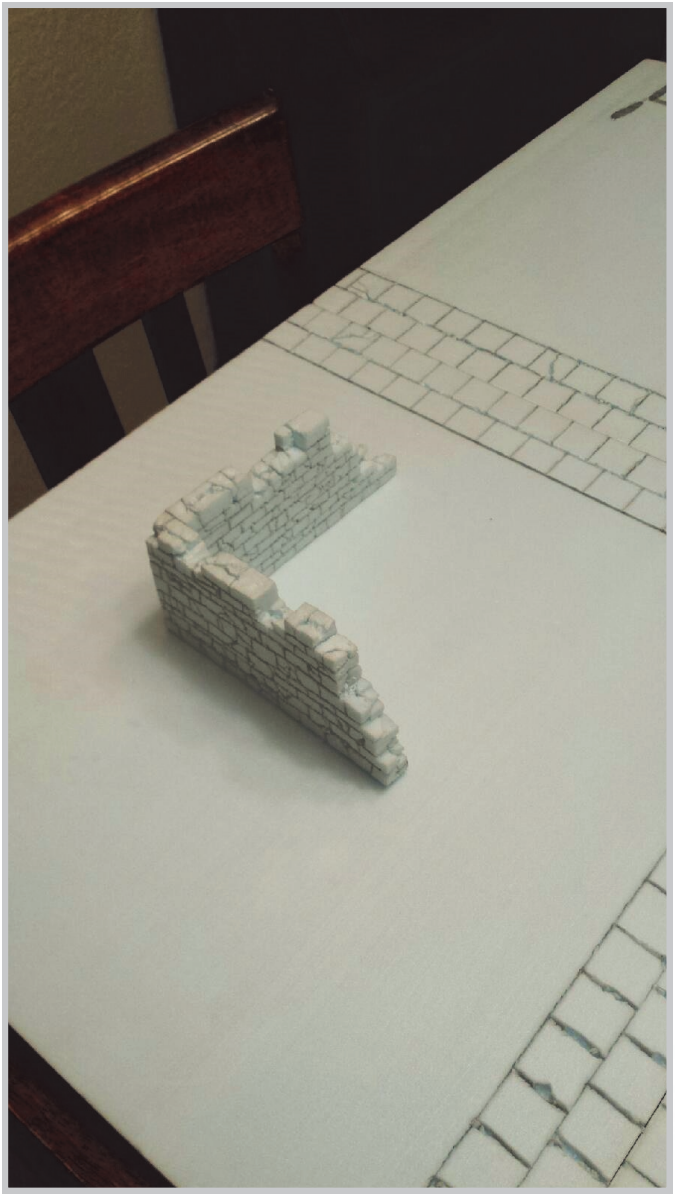
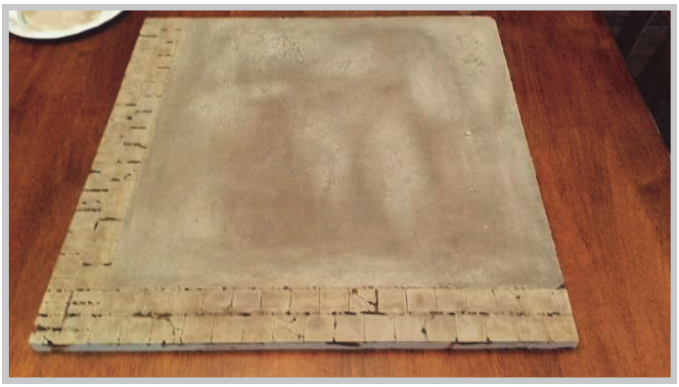
As you can see, I have hidden the seam lines within the design of the stone path. You can alter this pattern, if you do not want such a centralized feature on your gaming board. In the example that I have provided above, I cut the foam tiles into 18 inch by 18 inch sections. When placed together, they make a 3 foot by 3 foot gaming area. If you want, you can offset this, and make two tiles that are 2 foot by 2 foot, and then two more tiles that are 1 foot by 1 foot. This will move the stone path to one end of the game board. As long as the four tiles are joined together at the same point, you will achieve the desired effect.

You can then create as much terrain as desired, and place it anywhere on the gaming table. With some creativity, you can even use different tiles to hide your seam lines. This will not only achieve the desired effect, but it will also enable you to alter the height of your terrain in different areas.



The only thing left to do is paint the terrain and gaming tiles, and you will have a believable playing area fit to place your miniatures on. As an example, I have used a desert theme for my table. This is because I need a necropolis for my Empire of Dust adventures.



It's amazing what a little sand, paint, glue, and imagination can accomplish. You are not limited to an abandoned necropolis, however. You could just as easily do a dark and dank sewer, the dungeons of some long forgotten Dwarf hold, or even the courtyard of an expansive fortress. The possibilities are limitless.

I have shown you an example of a 3 foot by 3 foot playing area, which is ideal for Star-Struck City adventures. If you need a 6 foot by 4 foot gaming area for regular games of Kings of War, then just adjust the size of your tiles. The principle remains the same.

I hope that this article helps, until you get your "Ultimate Gaming Room". When you do, give me a call…because I will have to wait until my children are out of college before I can even start on mine…▪

Enforcers strike force by Chris Schlumpberger

DEADZONE: SESSION REPORT

By Tas Stacey

I played my first games of Deadzone last week. Deadzone is Mantic's Sci Fi skirmish game (like Necromunda, but heaps different). It was a lot of fun. The rules did not take long to pick up, and I was confident enough to write my own list. Rounds take between 30-60 minutes, you could easily slot 3 games in an evening. Not a lot to argue over in the rules, and the lists are all in the one book so it won't take long to get familiar with whatever you might be facing.

I really like this game, and I think it will be my next project after the big Kings of War tournament I'm attending at the end of January. If you are after a miniatures skirmish game with a low barrier to entry, quick, entertaining matches, but with enough depth to keep things interesting, check it out. Decent sculpts too. The Forge Fathers and Veer-Myn especially look great.

Anyway, on to my report.

My list: Veer-Myn 150 points

Progenitor with Chem Thrower. My leader unit with a quite rubbish flame-thrower. The plan was to keep this guy as safe as possible, I hate that such a fragile unit is worth so many points. Next time I'll definitely change this guy up. His Chem thrower is fine when he uses it, but if I'm that close to the enemy I'm fighting them in melee. I'll try and give

him the Grenade thrower next time. The Broodmother is a cool model but she seems to have an absolutely useless special rule and just not fit well with the rest of the army.

2 x Crawlers with Frag Grenades. Very rubbish marksmen with crappy rifles and very useful grenades. The idea of these guys was to use Fire for Effect to pin enemies, so I could get the extra dice in melee. But they are rubbish at shooting! It was nice having them as slightly-more-reliable Grenade chuckers. But next time I'll swap them out for Malignusi with rifles. If my progenitor has the grenade thrower I can afford to drop the frags from these guys and just use them to Fire for Effect.

8 x Stalkers. Fast moving rats with knives. These guys are the bomb. Fast and cheap. A couple of them can take down most enemies if given enough support. They melt to ranged fire though, so expect to lose most of them each battle. I ran them in two packs of 4. It's very important to keep them out of enemy LOS at all times.

Team tactics: Use Fire for Effect or grenades to pin enemies then charge them in melee. Repeat until enemy is dead or I run out of grenades/bodies to throw into melee. In practice the grenades were great, but Fire for Effect was less so (from the Crawlers anyway). 6+ shooting just isn't reliable enough. Will try the tactic with the 5+ Malignusi before I make a call on it.

Game 1 vs Enforcers

His list was like 6 enforcers, a couple with rocket launchers, one with the combat blade thingy.

Scenario: Breakout

The scenario suited me to a tee. His list had a lot of points sunk in AP weapons, while none of his units had any more than 1 Armor.

He took up firing positions along the buildings just outside his deployment zone. I moved up as far as I could, taking some risks as I did so. The first couple of activations went rough for me, with his superior

shooting picking off the rats that were foolish enough to not be completely out of LOS.

But my plan began to work in the mid game as my stalkers were able to sprint and catch some of his Enforcers who were uncovered by allies. If I make sure the enemy is pinned before I charge, it's my 5 dice hitting on 4s vs his 3 dice hitting on 4s (if he attempts to Survive rather than Fight). Them's good odds. If he survives the first charge, I almost always had another Stalker ready to go in to the same combat, same odds.

But the key turning point of the game came down to sheer luck. He had moved two of his Heavies on top of a platform with an almost crippling field of fire. I couldn't close on them without losing at least 4 rats in the process, and I had already lost 4. You can see them in the picture above, up the top left.

But one of my rats managed to pop a crate and find a smoke grenade inside. He pegged it at the heavies and covered them in smoke. Then they had the choice of staying where they were but being unable to fire, or moving and still being unable to fire.

Losing ~half of his firepower at that point was crippling for him, and I was able to safely flood across the gap and mix it up in melee. I had a hard time with his combat enforcer, but the rest I was able to gang up on and stab stab, and then run off the board.

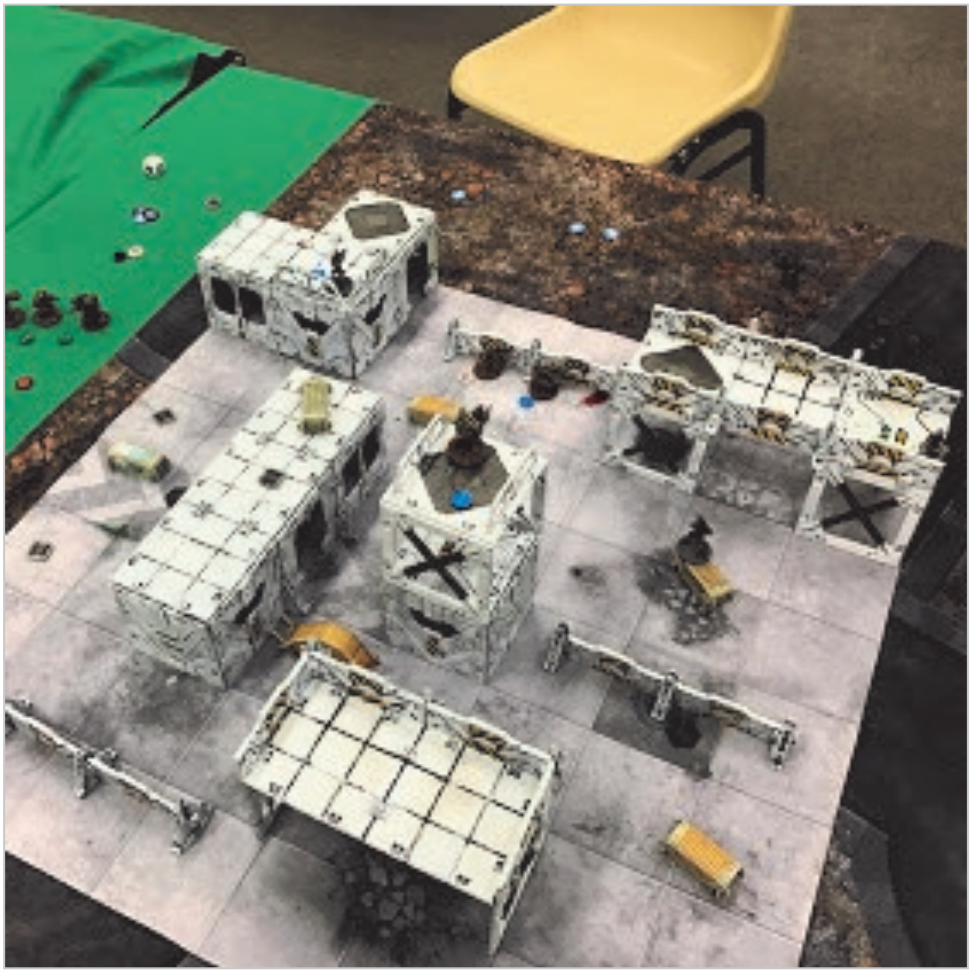
Luck played a large role in the outcome of this game, but I think my opponent's critical mistake was placing units in positions where they were isolated, not covered by friendlies. This meant I was able to charge 2-3 stalkers into melee and take down the isolated unit, and then skitter off into cover before the

A Deadzone firefight by Paul Mullis

counter-attack came. In the situations where his forward elements were covered, I had a much harder time of it. I took down the exposed unit, sure, but then the stalkers themselves were killed in turn. I can afford to lose ~1.5 rats per enemy killed. I can't have too many fights that cost me 2-3 rats.

Game 2 vs Rebels

His List:
Yndij Infiltrator Commander
3 x Rebel Trooper
Rebel Yndij
Sphyr Loader
Judwan Medic
Rebel Grogan
Rebel Teraton
Rin Nomad
Rebel Specialist with Missile Launcher



Second game was against an interesting Rebel list. A mix of all sorts of stuff. I was immediately worried about his Teraton. I had ~no~ idea how I was going to get through its armor, with no AP at all.

We played the scenario with the VP tokens. The 2VP token was in the open, in the middle of the board in an open square with very little cover. He chose his side, and deployed all along his edge, clearly aiming to take advantage of the high ground and cover just outside.

I deployed in tight packs, crammed into the squares that he had no LOS to.

Early on he used command dice to charge his Teraton forward, sitting him on the 2 VP token. His plan obviously was to take control of the important center location early, and move the rest of his squad up behind.

I had one plan to beat the Teraton, and I had to try it before any of his support arrived. I ran one of my shooter rats up a building and had him peg his grenade at the teraton. Fortunately the blast threw the Teraton towards my side of the map. This put the pinned Teraton within charge range of my 8 stalkers. My progenitor moved next, hitting the teraton with his chem-thrower. The 1 AP and a good roll were critical in doing 1 wound to the Teraton. Then one by one I sent stalkers

charging into the square. They got extra dice for charging, for having allies in the same square, and for the victim being wounded. He got extra dice for being huge and he was a good fighter. It took a round of shooting, 4 charges and one extra fight dice but the teraton eventually fell to the knives of the stalkers.

Marauder Captain by Grant Mahoney

That was huge. I was also able to get 2 of the 4 stalkers out of the square alive, as Glen had no way to bring his serious guns to bear on it. They mostly fled into the long building, or the basement of that central tower. In those rooms they were safe from all ranged attacks (no LOS with the holes in the walls being so high up), and Glen did not have any weapons that would have really helped (like grenades, flamers, or blasters). He tried sending a couple of guys on suicide missions, charging into melee in the dark rooms full of rats with knives. Yikes.

From there it was just a matter of waiting patiently for him to move his units into vulnerable positions and then striking with the stalkers I had stashed in the central buildings. I was tempted to try and park units on the VP tokens, but they were all exposed to the Rebels' fire, so I just waited. I had my remaining Crawler on top of the central tower taking a couple of pot-shots at his dudes each turn, so I could afford to sit tight. He had no choice but to move up and try and counterattack, and I was able to just pick him off one by one. I got very lucky with my survive rolls in the later phase of the game, with one of my stalkers managing to survive being shot at from above, while completely in the open. But even if all my rats who were shot at had died, I had so many I could afford the losses.

The key turning point of the game was Glen moving his Teraton up early, without adequate fire cover or support. If his Grogan had a decent fire lane down that center alley, or if the Medic had been close enough to do her thing, things would have been very different. If Glen had taken another big gribbly, or my grenade had thrown the teraton the other direction, the game would have gone very differently (although I did have 2 grenades).

But overall I'm really happy with the way the Veer-Myn played. I reckon they will be my primary faction, although I'll be painting up a squad of Forge Father Steel Warriors first.▪

DEADZONE
THE CLEANSING

PART TEN

By Matthew Lindsay

Dramatis Personae

- *Rylor Ings, Enforcer 8th First Recon Response*
- *Annika Sanne, 'The Fourth', Enforcer 8th First Recon Response*
- *Caelum Augustus, Enforcer Captain of the Gorgon's Fury*
- *Celeste Allenova, Enforcer Interrogator of the Gorgon's Fury*
- *Voya, Enforcer Sergeant of the Gorgon's Fury*
- *Kallon, Enforcer of the Gorgon's Fury*
- *Dr Harold Morentz.*

Forty-seven miles from Gamma Prime.
Location: Gamma Tau, two miles above surface.
17:32 hours Earth equivalent

Three shuttles had been needed to take the Enforcers to Gamma Tau.

Barely two were required to bring them home.

So few had survived. Of the twenty-one Enforcers deployed to Gamma Tau, eleven returned. Nine had escaped to the shuttles. Two more had managed to stay alive long enough to make their way to the surrounding wilderness and were found by their armor signals.

Of those total eleven, five had sustained life-threatening injuries. As well as suffering

Plague Strike Force by "C.M. Minis"

Plague Gen 2s surround desperate Marauder Commandos by Grant Mahoney

numerous wounds and losing blood, two Enforcers had lost arms, Voya her hand, and Rarkov had the left side of his face carved open. Rylor had suffered a puncture wound so deep he had collapsed on the return shuttle and needed emergency treatment.

Still, each had survived, the miracles of bionics and medicine grafting new limbs, skin and organs which were healed in a matter of hours.

Eight hours later, as the sun was beginning to set across the alien world, the Enforcers deployed again.

* * *

Gripping the shuttle's interior handle, Celeste let one hand go of the railing above her and leant out of the side-door. Immediately she felt the rush of wind against her skin. She drank in the sensation. The wind stung her eyes, but she refused to close them. Fields bled into forests which bled into mountains that rolled away beneath.

The shuttle cruised to its destination, an outlying research center that, confirmed with Command, was not present on any official documentation relating to Gamma Tau. This was where Annika's shuttle had

flown to, and the reconnaissance performed during the Enforcers eight-hour recovery had shown signs of movement and activity.

The pilot's voice crackled into life, relaying the familiar update.

'Drop ETA 3 minutes.'

Celeste glanced back at the shuttle following them, then pulled herself back inside and slammed the door closed. She pulled her helmet on, the blackened lenses lighting blue.

Sitting down opposite Voya, Celeste watched the sergeant still testing her new mechanical hand, grafted to replace the one she had lost in Gamma Prime. The movement of the fingers was flawless.

Voya curled it into a fist. Celeste appreciated the sergeant's candor.

They had all lost something.

More Enforcers were now stationed in orbit, deploying to the rest of Gamma Tau, securing any remaining locations of import and combatting the Plague where needed. Soon the world would be left to the dark reaches of space, become another black strikeout in the lost pages of hidden history. What had happened here would never be known.

But first, the Artefact remained. And there was still the matter of Annika Sanne.

The reinforcements had offered to aid them in the assault on the research facility, Augustus having liaised with their officers upon arrival, but the Captain had denied each of them, preferring to trust his own in this final matter.

Several trails of black smoke billowed upward, coalescing into one large, ominous sign of destruction: the top-side of the research center had been laid to waste, the artillery batteries of the Gorgon's Fury demolishing any surface defenses. A fire raged through the rubble and ruin as figures scrambled for cover.

As the two shuttles flew over, the Enforcers dropped out of the sky.

Celeste stepped out of the shuttle into nothingness, feeling free in that moment as the sky above receded and the ground had yet to emerge. She closed her eyes and

Reb Human Trooper by Jamie O'Toole

savored the joy of falling. She closed her eyes and allowed herself to simply… feel.

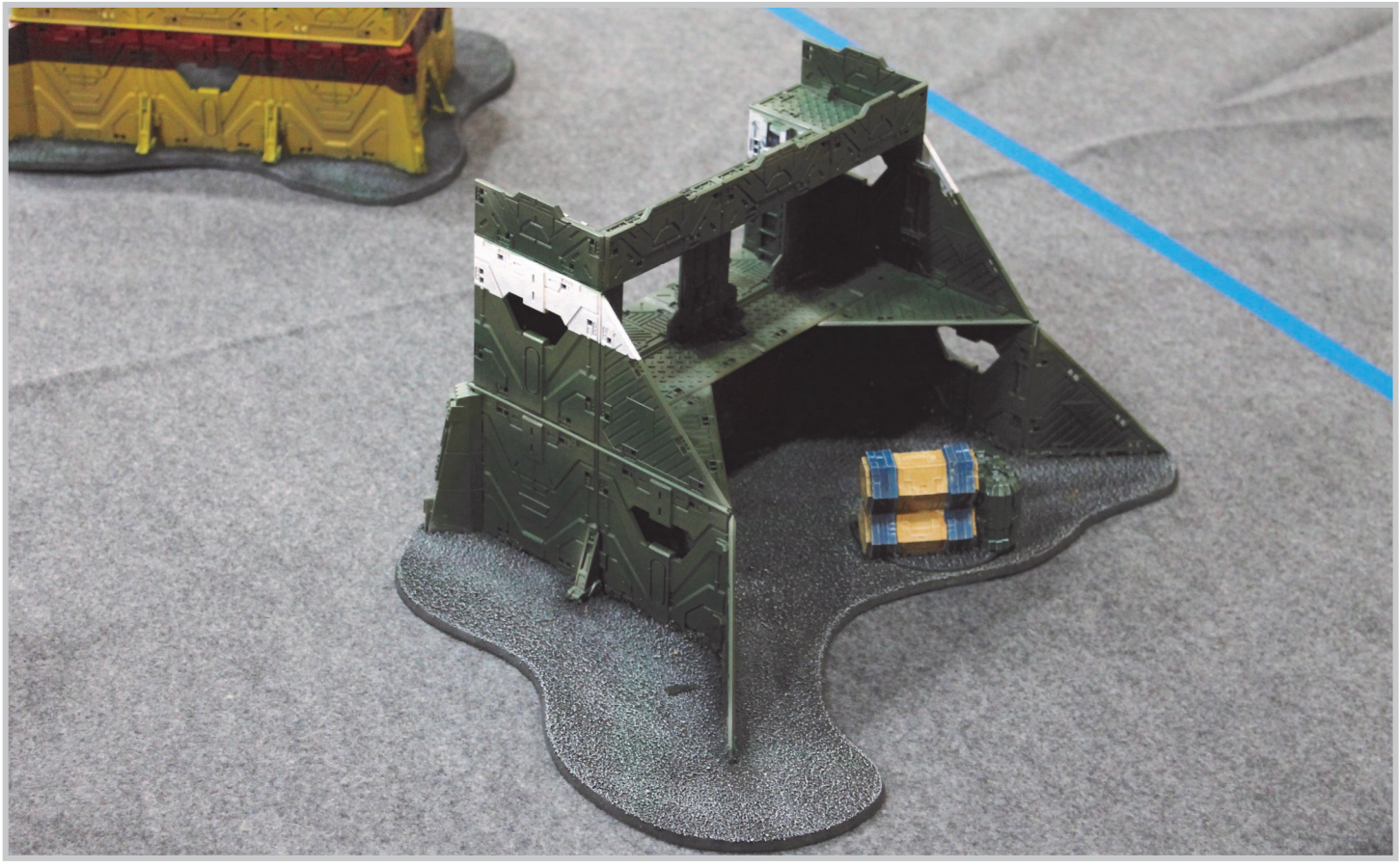
Weightless. Liberated.

And for a moment, a brief, beautiful moment, she lost herself. Sometimes she dreamt she was falling, and it was not a bad dream.

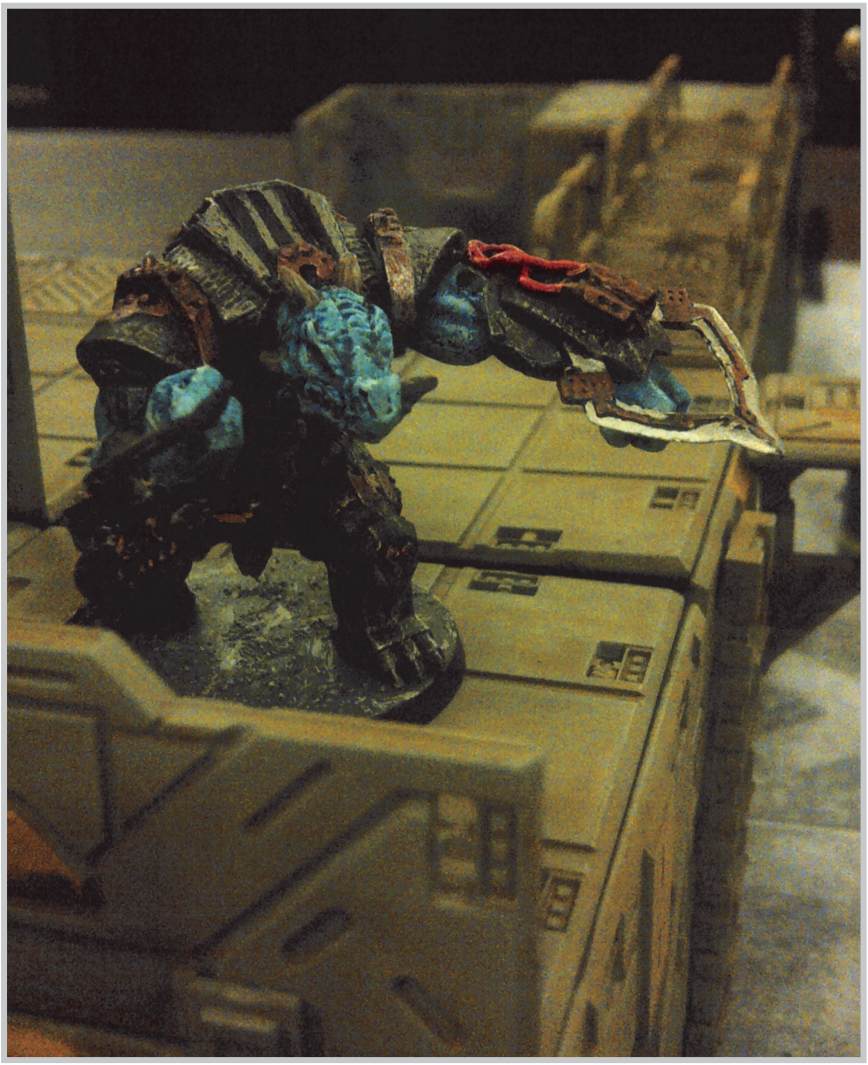
She opened her eyes: they had hardened into those of a predator. Gazing from above the smoldering ruins, her lenses locked onto the various movements beneath. Several meters from the planet surface she activated her jump-pack, the thrust slowing her descent into a controlled landing that struck the ground with the force to leave a crater, shattering the concrete. Her armor's power-assisted joints absorbed the recoil, and as she stood upright, she knew the effect an Enforcers appearance had.

The private military Rylor had spoken of were here: black-clad soldiers, weapons trained on the Enforcers, some retreating to the underground entrance, others finding cover where they could. Their aim was true, their hands steady, but their trigger fingers were still. Witnessing a being one-and-half times their size crash to the earth through smoke and fire, only to see this shadow of an armored being arise from its impact crater, had stirred the nauseous feelings of terror. Celeste looked to each of them in turn, aware of their realization that judgement had come in the form of a white-and-black humanoid wrecking ball.

Specifically designed to strike fear in those who saw it, the Enforcers appearance was an intimidating portrayal of callous indifference



Warpath terrain at Adepticon 2015, courtesy of Mantic Games



Reb Teraton by Paul Mullis

and absolute authority: The form-fitting armor, sleek and commanding, dwarfed the average-sized human and exerted its force in every powerful movement. The helms sharp features were dominated by emotionless ice-blue eye-lenses that contained no mercy, and to non-Enforcers, it was hard to imagine anything human could exist behind those eyes.

And it was these eyes that the black-clad soldiers saw gazing at them through air thick with smoke, the glow lighting up the ridges of Celeste's helmet, casting an impassive face that ghosted from the darkness.

The shadowy colossus moved, and the military began firing.

It was too late.

Minutes later, the eleven Enforcers walked through the surface ruin, executing any soldiers that had survived the initial onslaught.

It had been a massacre. Fighting the Plague was one thing, the infection posing a danger to the Enforcers through a combustible combination of lack of self-preservation and brute strength fueled by a viscous temperament, but sentient soldiers were akin to target practice. Conventional weapons posed little threat against Enforcers, their armor only breached by pin-point accuracy, explosives, or sheer force, and few had the nerve or ability to perform such acts upon the receiving end of an Enforcer's murderous efficiency.

'How many?' asked Augustus.

'I count twenty-six,' said Celeste.

'There's two more over here', Kallon called from behind a broken wall. Genling fire was heard. 'Three more.'

'Twenty-nine, then,' Augustus said. 'No casualties?'

'None,' said Celeste.

'Breach that door.' The Captain motioned to the large steel entrance cut at a recess to the

A Deadzone firefight by Shane Knerl

underground facility and began walking toward it. Several Enforcers had already moved to the sides, taking breaching positions, as one hacked the keypad with a data-box unit.

Celeste approached Rylor as he stood staring at the surrounding bodies.

'What are the numbers you say when you fight?' Celeste asked him. 'Numerous times I've heard you muttering under your breath. Are you counting ammo or counting kills?'

'You mean the rhyme? One-two, buckle my shoe, three-four, knock on the door?' Rylor replied, turning to face her.

'I don't know. I couldn't quite make it out, but that sounds like it.'

'It's a nursery rhyme my grandmother used to say to me. It's one I sang to my daughter, too.'

'You say the nursery rhyme you sing to your daughter, while you're fighting?' Celeste said, her surprise evident. Parenthood and war was an alien amalgamation to her.

Rylor seemed perplexed by her response, then shrugged.

‘It helps me focus. It reminds me what I’m doing this for. Every time. Every battle. One-two, buckle my shoe, three-four, knock on the door, five-six, pick-up sticks, seven-eight, lay them straight. I can never remember the rest. It goes up to twenty, I think. So I just start over.’

Celeste looked at Rylor, an incredulous look hidden behind her helmet. She’d realized she knew everything about him there was to know military wise, but that she knew little of the person.

She was an Enforcer. Her service was a part of her, it defined who she was, and what she strived for. But Rylor, she quickly comprehended, he was an Enforcer, First Recon no less, who had an entire persona, an entire life, outside of the military.

‘How does that rhyme go again, seven-eight, lay them straight? Well, you certainly laid them out straight,’ said Celeste, gesturing to the bodies before them.

Rylor’s aim had been pinpoint; four assailants lay before him, fallen in a straight line. ‘Gives your rhyme a kind of sinister feel, doesn’t it?’ She said. ‘Three-four, knock on the door? Guess they’re knocking on death’s door now.’ She nudged one with her boot.

‘I’ve never thought of it like that. Enforcer’s aren’t known for subtlety right? Isn’t that what you once said? Well, that was almost poetic.’

One the Enforcers called out; they had breached the door. Rylor began walking to the underground facility, his rifle christened Nemesis casually resting in his arms.

The underground facility was standard Corporation function-over-form. Overhead ceaseless and seamless white lights lit the white-wall corridors as large black numbers painted beside the various doorways and viewports designated the rooms: ‘surgery,’ ‘observation room four,’ ‘testing facility one’, and on the numbers went. Inside these rooms were various Plague in different stages of decomposition, their biological functions and the results of various obscene tests scattered about the walls.

The Enforcers made no effort to hide their presence now, killing without hesitation any of the remaining soldiers who had sought to make a last stand in the doorways and rooms. One had attempted to surrender and received a headshot. The black-clad military were cut down to a man.

Human Marines by Adam Morrow

Word from the Gorgon's Fury informed Augustus that an all-black shuttle had attempted to leave the facility and had been destroyed.

'Slow, it seems, they are to realize that their fate is sealed,' mused Celeste out loud, as Augustus relayed the news. 'Or perhaps they are just loyal to the end.'

Augustus knew nothing could bring them back the Enforcers he had lost on Gamma Tau, but vengeance was cathartic, for the body count of the black-clad soldiers now totaled forty one, the white walls of the corridors indiscriminately colored blood-red where the Enforcers passed.

Augustus thought: *In Gamma Prime they had the advantage of distance and surprise, but now we fight on our terms.*

No sooner had he thought this than Rarkov turned a corner and a bullet struck him squarely in the forehead, blowing a red mist out the back of his helmet.

A second shot struck Kallon also in the corridor, the force dropping him as his shoulder was ruined.

'Sniper!' he screamed.

A third shot hit Kallon in the leg as he sought to crawl out of the killbox, the corridor

An Enforcer Captain's last stand against the Plague by Chris Schlumpberger

Enforcer Peacekeeper by Loic Boudoya

providing no cover against such precision. A fourth shot took his other leg.

The Enforcers formed up against the corridor wall, as Kallon slowly tried to drag himself with his one good arm.

'Stay down!' shouted Augustus, understanding that the sniper was purposely not killing Kallon in an attempt to draw out others to aid him.

Kallon collapsed to the floor, his form barely moving.

Rylor ran to the edge of the corner where the corridor began, pushing past Augustus. He slowly knelt and leaned his rifle out of cover as another shot pierced through the scope where he had been about to place his eye.

'For the love of the gods that once were, let them pass. You can't kill them all, and I am loathe to delay any longer. Captain, you and your men may enter my chambers, and let us settle this. I say again: stand down,' said an androgynous voice over the internal speakers.

Rarkov's helm faced toward the ceiling, witness to something no living being could see. Augustus held up a fist to signal that no one was to move, and beckoned Kallon. The bloodied Enforcer crawled to the edge of the corridor and was pulled around the corner, as one of the medics immediately began treating his wounds.

No more shots were fired.

Rylor stepped back and inspected where Kallon's armor had been breached and saw familiar entry and exit points, the same his own armor-piercing rounds left.

Ballistic weaponry of that caliber was highly specialized and extremely rare.

The sniper was using a First Recon weapon.

Annika.

Sergeant Voya kicked down the door and led her breach team into a sizeable set of personal chambers. In the middle sat a male figure behind a large, curving oak desk, clearly imported from off-world. To the left of the desk stood a woman, dressed in black military fatigues.

Two Enforcers immediately restrained the male and female, searching for weapons. Voya and three others tore the room apart,

Enforcers and Pathfinder by Marcel Popik

looking for anything that could pose a threat. After several heartbeats and the sound of several things breaking, Voya turned to the doorway and nodded to Augustus.

The Captain, flanked by Celeste and Rylor, entered the room proper. The remaining two Enforcers stationed themselves outside.

Like being taken to another world, the chambers felt removed from the rest of the facility. The cold clinical aesthetic of the installation ended dead at the doorway as Augustus' armored boot was immersed in thick, crimson carpet. Various art hung on the walls beneath the light of a chandelier, and a raised single bed in the corner was carved from a rich, dark wood.

However, a closer inspection revealed that despite the seeming comfort and grandeur of the room it harbored a restlessness that permeated everything, despite being torn apart by the Enforcers search, akin to the rest of the facility. Cabinets, drawers and storage units had been left open; multiple reports and documents with notes scrawled lay scattered about; several days' worth of discarded food and drink had begun to rot; the bed was not slept in.

Augustus gestured and the two Enforcers restraining the male and female occupants released them, took a step back and raised their weapons, prepared to fire should they perceive any threat of aggression from their captives.

Face to face, Augustus studied the persons before him.

The ones who had eluded him.

The ones who had caused the deaths of fourteen Enforcers.

The male befit the state of the chamber: tall and gaunt, with dark rings around his eyes, the result of sleepless nights. Several days growth of stubble shaded his features. His short black hair was swept aside in a poor effort to tame it.

There was no mistaking the woman: Piercing eyes, resembling steel in both hardness and color coolly regarded the Enforcers beneath roughly cropped dark hair, and a thin mouth and soft features that had an almost noble demeanor showed no fear. Her face was unforgettable; all the Enforcers present knew her for the Captain had made sure she was to be recognized immediately on sight.
Annika Sanne.

As he entered the room and saw her, time slowed for Rylor. Not only did he recognize the woman, but he recognized the male, too, sitting behind the desk.

Rylor thought: *how could such a thing be?*
But his eyes he could not tear from Annika.

As if he was thrashing underwater, the sound and pressure of the blood in his ears rose to the crescendo of the crashing waves a drowning man is pulled beneath; the relentless force, the fear and the struggle, then absolute black and complete silence as the fall began; the light above fading further and further; eyes lose focus; heart and lungs give out; the realization smothered by darkness: *I am alone.*

An encroaching obscurity of the edge of his vision blurred his sight and the shadows cast within the chamber grew toward him, elongated wretched black claws that grasped for his mind. No longer Rylor saw the room around him, no longer he felt the reassuring weight of his armor. He couldn't taste and he couldn't hear. All he could do was breathe, and see.

He did the best he could to maintain his calm.

GCPS Marines by Matt Gilbert

Celeste sensed a subtle change in Rylor upon sight of Annika, watching his grip around his rifle tighten, then relax, then tighten again.

Annika Sanne seemed indifferent to the weapons levelled at her. The only suggestion she was even aware of the ominous circumstances her life balanced in was her initial eye contact that Rylor had caught from behind his helmet as her gaze flickered with an unquantifiable intelligence.

Unquantifiable because, Rylor realized, staring at Annika, drinking in her form, he had never known what she was thinking. Their years together, their life together, their shared breaths and stolen moments, even their child: he knew now, he had never known her at all.

She didn't recognize him. For a brief heartbeat, a lost breath, a frozen image now engraved, he thought she looked into his lenses and saw not an expressionless, featureless Enforcer, but Rylor Ings – the man, the father of her child – but she continued to scan the room, and that moment when he would have done anything for her, ceased to exist. She did not recognize his bearing, she did not recognize his posture, she did not recognize him.

She recognized nothing.

Rylor could pick Annika out in full gear from a room of Enforcers. Such a connection was not broken in the donning of armor, it was beyond that. The subtle nuances that made her, her, could never be hidden from him.

But this bond was not reciprocated. So sure was she of his death, Rylor knew, she did not see him.

He was dead to her, and she had been the one to pull the trigger.

From first sight the facial-recognition software of Augustus' lenses had been studying the man's features, and in a matter of moments, the Captain knew everything he needed to know about the figure sitting before him.

'Dr Harold Morentz. You are a man in demand: a list of investigations that stretches back decades, with multiple Corporations employing your services as an

Heavy weapons Enforcer by "Tolouse Miniatures"

Plague Gen 2s by "C.M. Minis"

"outside consultant". They must be very brave, or very foolish, to employ one so mired in controversy.' Augustus marked the Corporations for investigation.

'Progress… progress demands courage,' said Morentz. His voice was hard, taut like the steel wire of a garrote, one Augustus knew the doctor felt slowly tightening about his neck. Morentz clasped and unclasped his fingers.

'It does. Men like you are hard to find, doctor. It takes a singular lack of humanity to do what you do,' said Augustus. He scanned through the investigations on the doctor: malpractice, gross misconduct, and one crucial factor that emerged again and again; a seeming intent to harm.

'You, a man outfitted solely to kill, would lecture me on humanity?' Morentz retorted, his hands forming an arrowhead directed at the Captain.

The doctor is seemingly resigned to whatever fate he was to meet, thought Celeste. But his pride won't let him go silent.

'I do not seek to lecture you doctor. Frankly, I do not care what it is you have to say. You are not my superior, and you are not an Enforcer. Thusly, your opinion means nothing,' Augustus stated.

'I am a thrice-doctorate of bio-molecular evolution, medicine and psychology, I have studied and learnt more than you will ever –' began Morentz.

'Where is it, doctor?' Augustus interrupted, employing his vocal-amplifier harshly to cut the doctor's sentence dead.

Marauder Goblin Snipers by Grant Mahoney

'Where is what?'

Celeste thought: *Morentz is not used to being interrupted. She waited for the inevitable question.*

'The Artefact,' Augustus informed.

'That's just it, isn't it? You don't give a damn about – anything! About the years of painstaking research, the sacrifices made. I am not blind, Captain,' said Morentz. 'I know I have performed evil acts… evil acts, but necessary acts, to create new and better worlds.' The doctor spoke slowly, emphasizing his words. 'I know there is no place for me in these new worlds – but only my work could make them. And now you would remove this catalyst, and allow us all to slide back into the abyss from whence we crawled.'

'The Artefact,' replied Augustus.

'We have come so far – no other has the courage, the fortitude and the required intellect in correct measurement to do what I have done. I have damned myself for love of my species!' The doctor's voice rose as his righteousness fueled by ego gathered momentum.

'The Artefact,' repeated Augustus.

'So I have damned myself for nothing?' Morentz attempted to rise from his seat but was roughly pulled back down into the chair by one of the Enforcers.

Morentz turned and glared at the Enforcer who had restrained him, then turned back to Augustus. He clasped and unclasped his fingers again, then a third and fourth time. 'No.'

Annika remains indifferent, noted Celeste.

The fugitive First Recon hadn't moved, nor had her bearing changed, as the doctor spoke his tirade of justification.

'Doctor, you can tell us willingly, or I assure you, you will be tortured unto the precipice of death and you will beg to tell us. The Artefact, or suffer. To me, it matters not in which order,' said Augustus.

'And what will you do with the Artefact, Captain?' asked Morentz.

'That is no longer your concern,' said Augustus, as he stepped forward and placed both hands on the desk, looking down at the doctor. 'I grow tired of your stalling. I am not bluffing, Morentz. Do not test me, because you-will-lose,' Augustus imitated the doctor's pattern of speech, emphasizing each word. He allowed the threat several seconds to fester, then continued: 'Tell me where the Artefact is. Now. Or the pain begins.'

As Augustus spoke, Celeste slowly and deliberately drew her combat blade, letting the light catch its razor edge. She could visibly see the internal struggle of the doctor as he wilted beneath Augustus and threat the Captain held.

But Morentz remained steadfast, and silent.
In two strides Celeste vaulted the desk, lunged, and drove the point of her blade into Morentz's right kneecap. He screamed as she felt the metallic tip sickeningly force its way through, ripping flesh and grating bone. She twisted the blade to more screams, the leg convulsing beneath, before placing both hands atop it and forcing the blade down to the hit, severing tendons and splitting marrow.

Deadzone terrain cube by Jamie O'Toole

Morentz wailed but uttered no words, breathing with the rhythm of shock, biting his lip so hard blood began to spill, unable to look at the damage done.

Celeste withdrew the blade with a slick spittle of blood, and pressed the tip against his other knee.

'No – no more,' gasped Morentz. 'No more.'

'The Artefact?' said Augustus.

Morentz's faced balled up as he wailed and shook his head side to side. Celeste drove the point down into the second kneecap, following the pattern of the first. She stood up, no longer waiting for Augustus to ask, and pressed the blade against the doctor's shoulder now, the Enforcer behind him removing his hand. She put pressure on the joint, letting the threat speak for itself. With her free hand, she grasped Morentz's ruined knee, and squeezed, the force of her power-assisted joints crushing the bone further.

After the screaming had stopped, following by a few seconds of silence where Morentz was clasping his fingers so tightly his knuckles turned white, the doctor semi-incoherently spluttered out the words: 'Down the hall and to the left. The steel door to the chamber without a viewport. The containment field's sequence is 0-3-1-0-6!'

Augustus didn't move, the light of the chandelier above casting his shadow upon the doctor. Celeste nodded to Voya who took left the room with three Enforcers, weapons raised.

Morentz's head fell and he covered his mouth with his hands.

Minutes later, they returned with the Artefact in tow, sealed in a military-grade protective casing.

'Artefact secured,' said Voya.

So small a thing, to condemn me to death, thought Rylor, stood in the corner of the room, his gaze unwavering from Annika. He didn't have to see the Artefact to recall it, so perfectly imprinted upon his memory was its image.

As were the moments it had almost cost his life.

A shot rings out. He turns, raising his weapon, expecting to see a Plague Stage Three firing.

Rylor studied everything about Annika as she stood silent, the only movement the rising and falling of her chest.

He doesn't. It's Annika. She's unloaded a bullet into the Third's skull from behind.

His surroundings had faded now; he could almost pretend he was in another time and place.

She turns to him.

She turned to him, stood standing in the doorway of their bedroom. She looked at him as she held their child.

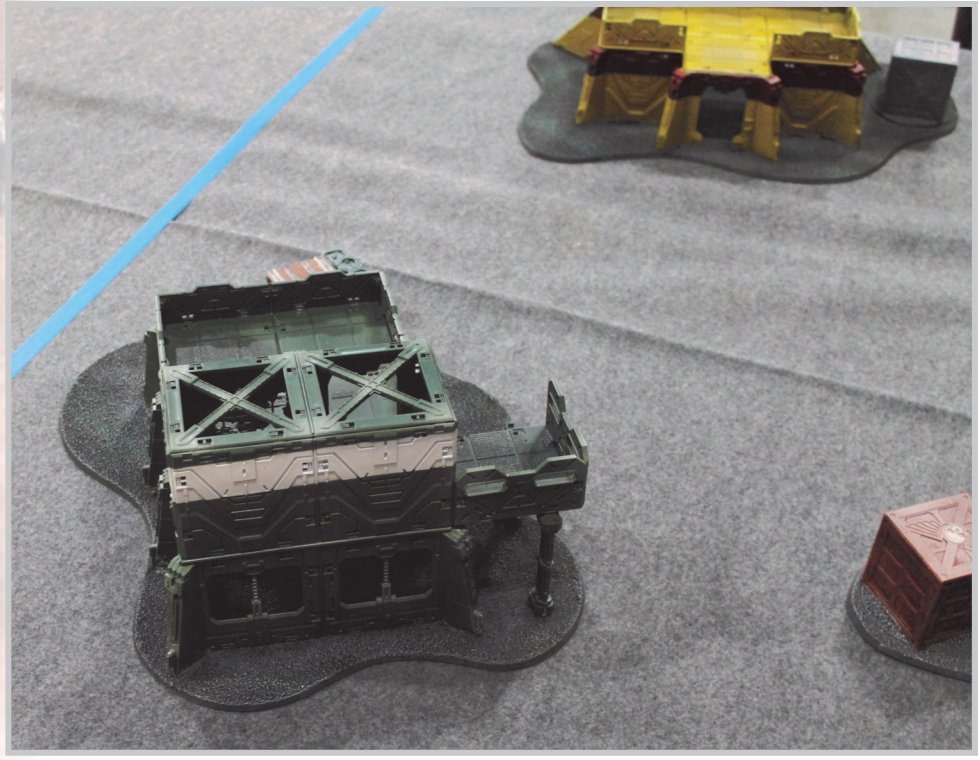
A shot rings out.

Any moment now, she would smile.

Darkness.

But here, in this reality, far removed from memory, her lips remained impassive.

As Voya confirmed the Artefact had been secured, Augustus, for the first time, turned to look at Annika. *No image, he thought, no matter how intently studied, could ever match the reality.*



Warpath terrain at Adepticon 2015, courtesy of Mantic Games

He gripped the edges of the wide desk and harnessing the cold fury and desire for vengeance coiled tightly within him, flung it against the wall.

The rich wood splintered from the sheer force. The doctor winced, whether from his shattered knees of the noise of the breaking desk, Augustus did not care. The sound reverberated through the room, followed by an ominous silence. Morentz closed his eyes, as if to shield himself from the Captain's fury.

'I do not believe the mind I was given, I was not supposed to use,' Morentz choked from behind his hands. 'What are any of us here for if not to push the boundaries of our lives and seek that which we desire?' He laid his arms upon the desk in open supplication, raising his eyes to look up at the Captain.

By Matthew Adlard

He knows now there is nothing he can say or do to placate, thought Celeste. Forgoing pride, now we will see the man for what he truly is.

'You want to speak of desire, doctor?' Augustus said. His carefully controlled tone was akin to the sound of ice cracking beneath too much weight, the cold snap of the syllables a clear warning not to proceed. 'I desire recompense for those who gave their lives to end your sordid fantasy. The First Recon team you' – he pointed at Annika – 'betrayed. The list is long. Too long. That is what I desire. What is it you, here and now, so desire?'

'I desire justice! I have not betrayed you – you have betrayed me!' cried Morentz in a

Forgefather Brokkrs by Paul Mullis

voice fueled by pain and perceived injustice. 'The Universe is in no fit state. We are born to but suffer and fight! Yes, I fight too Captain. Perhaps not on the front lines, but I fight all the same!' The doctor gestured wildly, fear and mania cracking his haughty exterior. He pointed at the Captain: 'I fight ignorance, and fear of progress, to give you and your kind the weapons you need to win these wars! And these wars, what are they but the death throes of a dying animal? Lashing out with it final knowledge that "this is the end". What good can come from this sorry state of affairs? What is the universe but an arena of bloodshed and misery?' The doctor was crying now, shouting through tears as he wailed his lamentations, broken in agony. 'Don't you understand? He who can destroy a thing, he controls it! And with my work, by controlling the Plague, we can destroy entire worlds. Other races will have to bend the knee. Humanity, so threated on all sides, will become the dominant force in the known galaxy.' Morentz took a breath, his face flushed, hands curled into fists as his useless legs splayed out beneath him. 'And as such, the Council, in time, will thank me.'

'The Plague can't be controlled,' said Celeste, bluntly dismissing Morentz's sermon.

'It can! I have! Don't you see? We cannot stop now. There is no going back. We are the fulcrum of the future and nothing great was ever achieved without great sacrifice. I mourn for those lost here, but I would do it again! Wouldn't you? Don't you see? How can you not see?' Morentz's breathing was ragged, his words laced with high pitches and somber tones as pain continued to course through his body in searing white-hot waves.

The doctor threw up, head lolling, as he struggled for breath.

Augustus stepped back from the doctor and spoke to Voya on a private comm-channel. 'Take four. Return in one shuttle to the Gorgon's Fury and secure the Artefact. Inform Command to begin final preparations for departure of Gamma Tau.'

'Acknowledged,' said Voya. She gestured at four Enforcers in the room and left, two in front, two behind.

The doctor grasped the sides of his head, sucked in a breath, and, swelling his chest, continued shouting to no-one in particular: 'Could the Plague be controlled? Could the Plague be guided – even taught? Could we turn an Enforcer? All of these questions, and more, played over and over in my mind. No such thing had ever been done before. But could we? Could we? Could I? Over and over those questions played... with only one logical answer: Yes. If I could ask such a question, I could answer it, also!' Morentz was positively screaming now, as he witnessed the Artefact be removed from sight, his mania now self-perpetuating. 'So take my work! My legacy will remain! What I have done cannot be undone! One frontier planet lost, but what I have discovered will...

A Deadzone firefight by Shane Knerl

save us all.' The doctor spat the words at Augustus. 'And you, all of you – in time, you will die, and be forgotten,' he shrieked. 'That is your damnation, for halting the progress of better minds than yours –'

Celeste stepped forward and flung an armored fist at Morentz. His head snapped back from the impact, stunning him. The Interrogator grabbed his hair and forced him to face her before landing three more powerful blows to his face. When she was done the white of her gauntlet was smeared red, as blood dripped from Morentz's shattered nose and cut and broken cheeks and left eye socket. He coughed out several teeth and sobbed quietly.

'And what was your role here?' Celeste asked Annika, still gripping the doctor's hair.

'It was a test of loyalty – or the lack of it,' Morentz wheezed, through tears, gazing at the floor. 'Annika's words were hollow until she had proven she meant to see our mutual goal through. There was no other way. Whatever she had done thus far, whatever she promised to do, an Enforcer is still… an… Enforcer.' Celeste let go of the doctor and looked down at him. Morentz did not meet her gaze. 'We meant to test whether her mind was under sway… the sway of the ridiculous fanaticism your kind are so famous for…' The doctor looked up, seeing only vague outlines of his captors. 'But what could prove such a thing?'

'A test,' said Augustus to Annika. 'You killed your entire squad, for a test?'

'Betrayal,' said Annika, speaking for the first time: 'A word tyrants use to describe independent thought.'

Annika's voice matched her form: gentle, relaxed. And in that similarity was a haunting chill, for her words, much like her poise, like every muscle and fiber of her body, was harnessed and delivered with cool, calculated logic. The same voice Augustus had heard on the public comm-channel atop the Corporation tower after he had requested shuttle extraction. *The same voice that condemned us to die, he thought, with three simple words: it's not coming.*

Three words. Three words that had been delivered like the blows of a knife into his gut as their shuttles were engulfed in flame, and

Rebs Missile Team with Sphyr Loader by Adam Morrow

Enforcer Sniper by Chris Schlumpberger

he watched the men and women under his command prepare themselves for death at the hands of a howling, shrieking, inhuman infection.

I promised the debt would be paid, in full, thought Augustus.

'Could an Enforcer willingly turn their weapon upon their own?' Annika said, her eyes flashing. 'Anything else is mere speculation.' Her gaze went distant, as if she saw something within the room no others could. 'Worlds without war,' she whispered.

'Yes, a test,' supported Morentz, his deep breathing slowly steadying though spittle still fell from his open mouth. 'One performed beyond all expectation. Annika could swear on the heavens and the stars, the new and forgotten gods, on the very life of her child, and still... we would not believe her. But the… summary… execution of her own? Now, there was a test that could harbor no subterfuge. No falsehood. There would be no way back for her should she prove her devotion to our vision here. We are so close to seeing that vision a reality…'

Enforcer Pathfinder by Loic Boudoya

The doctor hacked up blood, some landing on Celeste's armor. She looked down at the red stains. *A swollen jaw is difficult to speak though, she mused.*

'When she pulled the trigger, we knew her words to be true,' Morentz finished.

'It was your idea, wasn't it?' Augustus stated to Annika. 'You offered this up.'

The ex-First Recon Enforcer slowly nodded.

Rylor, witnessing the exchange with an ever-growing numbness, was aware of this all, but somehow felt above it, removed from it, a silent third party observer, a ghost. But as Annika nodded, and confirmed it was her idea to put a bullet in him, he felt something deep within him break so violently he physically recoiled within his armor.

'Why?' said Rylor, using his vocal-amplifier to distort his voice.

Annika regarded him from his periphery of her vision. 'Worlds without war,' she said again. 'A undisputed species; a weapon unmatched. A reign that could last all eternity. And a universe where a child could grow, without fear, without loss. Where a child's parents wouldn't be taken, by death or by duty, the left child wondering if they will ever see their mother or father again.' Annika shook her head. 'I do not expect you to understand, but I know of what I speak.'

'You realize what you have done, correct? Few Enforcers have children. Even fewer are granted the privilege to see them, such is the absolute loyalty expected by the Council for the work we must do. You have just damned each and every one of them to have their children removed from them,' said Celeste.

'And that is my fault?' asked Annika, defiance curling across her features. 'How so?'

'Because you – an Enforcer – turned upon your own with the admittance it was for ou–your–a child!' exclaimed Rylor; so close had he been to saying "our". Where before there had been numbness, now there was a boiling rage, with the realization should he survive this their daughter, his daughter, would be taken from him regardless.

Celeste sensed Rylor's control slipping at the mention of his daughter and Annika's obliviousness to his presence, though his

stumble of words has sparked a curious look in Annika's eye. It was quickly hidden, but Celeste saw it, nonetheless.

She signaled to Augustus: *we have to end this.*

I have one last question, Augustus replied. If Rylor moves to aggression, restrain him. 'You say your work will live on, doctor,' Augustus said, judgment weighing heavy in his voice. 'I want you to know, before you die, I am going to have this place destroyed.'

'But you cannot!' said Morentz. 'Your first rule: contain outbreak, preserve infrastructure!'

'There is nothing here that cannot be rebuilt. Furthermore, I have been reprimanded before. I will face the consequences, regardless of what they are, in the knowledge that what you offer, was far worse: madness. Worlds without war?' Augustus said, turning to address Annika. 'Delusions of grandeur. Such a thing is impossible.'

'It isn't,' the doctor hissed.

'Very well. You say your work will live on, doctor. You claim, that what you have done, cannot be undone. Tell me, then. How do you do it? How do you control the Plague? Convince me, after your imminent death, to deliver your work to the Council.'

Enforcer Pathfinder by Marcel Popik

Morentz laughed, but it sounded more like wheezing through his bloodied face. 'That's it, isn't it? Oh very clever, Captain, but a wordsmith you are not. Deception does not become you. You have to deliver my work, despite what you say. Your first rule: contain outbreak, preserve infrastructure. You won't break that. You can't!' Morentz wheeze-laughed again, victorious mania dancing in his single un-swollen eye. 'The Council will see what I have begun, and I will be exonerated. But, yes, to elaborate:

'The Plague is a biological recoding of the very DNA of all that it touches, directing all functions to infection – or, in another word, procreation. Is that not what all living things seek? To live, to thrive, to spread? So I followed this line of enquiry. Deep down in the heart of living, at the molecular level, the Plague and we are essentially the same. Survival is the ultimate programming; it is hardwired into our DNA. "Go forth, and multiply". Isn't that what the religion of Old Earth says? All living things seek the same: procreation. This is the sole function of the Plague. And so, I harnessed that.'

'He's speaking of bait,' said Celeste, shaking her head. 'Just simple bait.'

'Simple bait? Simple bait?' Morentz susurrated. 'No! Bait, perhaps, but not simple. Never simple. You say simple because you believe anyone could do it, perhaps? Not true. Sometimes, the simplest actions are the hardest, and if that is the case, then simple they are not. I did it, because I could. And no other ever has, had, or would. And you say simple? Decades of work, leading to here and now:

'I chose Annika, from the moment of cutting her open to deliver her child, having seen the fierce protectiveness she had. And every time she returned home, we spoke, of how

Plague overwhelm the defending Enforcers by Matt Gilbert

Plague Gen 2 by "Toulouse Miniatures"

she longed to stay with her child, but never could. Like myself, the right qualities, in the right amounts; such a rare amalgamation.

'I chose Gamma Tau and its population. Employing the right connections and working for the right Corporations, to agree bring me here.

'I chose to fund my research.

'Yes, call it bait, then, to redirect the Plague's attention. I released live bait, and with the specimens we recovered, I could investigate their biological properties without interference, and recode it myself, to following orders.

'And you, you stand there in your righteousness, and have the gall to call my work simple,' Morentz finished.

'Bait – unarmed civilians – you are speaking of unarmed civilians. You sent them to a fate worse than death. I've seen the bodies doctor. Children,' retorted Celeste.

'Who are you to say what is worse than death? You, who stand there, clad in the armor the Council has made specifically to inspire fear in those they claim to govern justly? Have you not killed children, human or otherwise? Have you not just about killed anything that could walk, talk, or crawl upon the planets? Oh yes, I know you, Enforcer. I know your ilk. You are mere weapons. Deadly weapons, yes, but weapons all the same. A tool. A thing to be used, then discarded. The Council propagates the myth of the Enforcer, the fanatical loyalty, the unwavering devotion, only to rule. It seeks to grind the galaxy under its heel, and you are the boot which they wear to do so. That is your lot in life.'

'Everything I have done,' said Celeste, 'I would do again, in the knowledge it was necessary. And only – ever – necessary.'

'My point exactly,' spoke Morentz, loathing filling his voice.

'And have you?' Augustus interrupted, holding up a hand for silence.

'Have I what?' Morentz replied.

'Have you succeeding in recoding the Plague to follow orders?'

‘Inconclusive, but with promising results,’ Morentz said. ‘Extremely promising.’

‘In other words, you failed,’ Augustus stated.

‘You failed,’ repeated Celeste to Morentz. ‘It’s that simple.’

‘Human error has ever been the bane of scientific study. Failure is but the path to success. Others will follow, who will finished what I started,’ said Morentz, shrugging, with a look of resignation; a grotesque appearance, as swollen and bloodied as his face was.

Celeste placed herself between Annika and Morentz and faced the doctor.

Plague Gen 2s by “C.M. Minis”

‘We know more of the Plague than you ever could, doctor. Interesting that you never consulted the Enforcers? Rather, you employed a traitor.’

‘Because I knew I would be shut down.’

‘Exactly. Because what you’re attempting to do, cannot be done.’ Harold Morentz opened his mouth to protest but Celeste grabbed his jaw and squeezed, the pressure and pain silencing the doctor. ‘Shut up,’ she said. ‘How long have you studied and festered this doctor? How long have you tortured, mutilated, sacrificed in the name of your fantasy? Twenty years? Thirty years? Longer?’ Celeste let go of his jaw, and laid a hand on his shoulder. ‘No need to answer. It was a rhetorical question, to illustrate the point, this sentence is long overdue.’

As Celeste uttered those final words she slammed the point of her combat blade into the doctors throat and in one swift, violent motion, tore it out. A look of surprise and shock convulsed on the doctors face as he sought to cough or to speak: Celeste couldn’t tell which; she kicked Annika’s knee out, drew her pistol and pressed it to Annika’s temple.

‘No – ’ began Rylor.

Celeste looked to him, looked at Annika, and pulled the trigger.

Annika's body toppled.

Celeste holstered her pistol and walked to the door, leaving a trail of bloody footprints in her wake where the doctor had collapsed and bled out beneath her. She stopped next to Rylor.

'If you're going to shoot, then shoot. Don't talk.'

Augustus nudged the body with his boot. 'And so is ended the great doctor.'

'What of his research?' asked Celeste.

'Burn it. Burn it all. There is nothing here but death.'

The doctor looked up at them, his final expression one of shock and disbelief, as his life's work was immersed in flame.

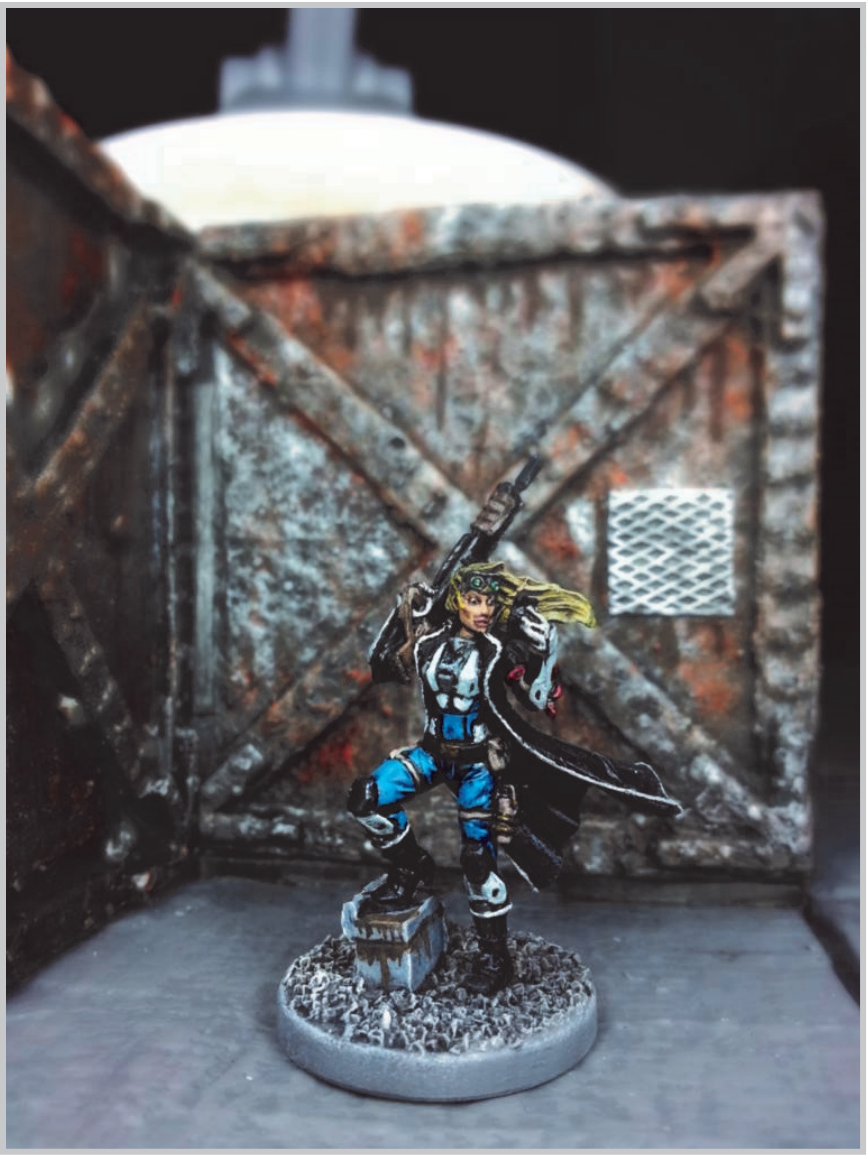
* * *

Several weeks later, the Enforcers having returned to their respective units, the newly-appointed Commander Augustus was walking with his newest Captain, Celeste Allenova, in the halls of the council. They had just returned from a meeting with High Command, who, following the Annika incident (as it had come to be known), had instituted mandatory sterilization of all

Forgefather Stormrage Veteran by Grant Mahoney

Enforcers, with the option of individual reversals should an Enforcer later prove worthy and desire a family. Those who already had children would now undertake hidden study for their motivations and reasoning capabilities regarding their loyalty to the Council compared with that of their families; those who failed would be sent to the worst fronts of war where the mortality rates were highest.

The idea had been Augustus'. It had been well received.



Reb Commander by Jamie O'Toole

As the two officers discussed the finer points of the implementation of the new protocol, they were interrupted by a direct call to Augustus' comm-link:

'Commander, my apologies for the interruption, but you asked to be informed of any developments of the Enforcer Rylor Ings G38-04,' said an intelligence officer.

Augustus halted and gestured Celeste to do the same.

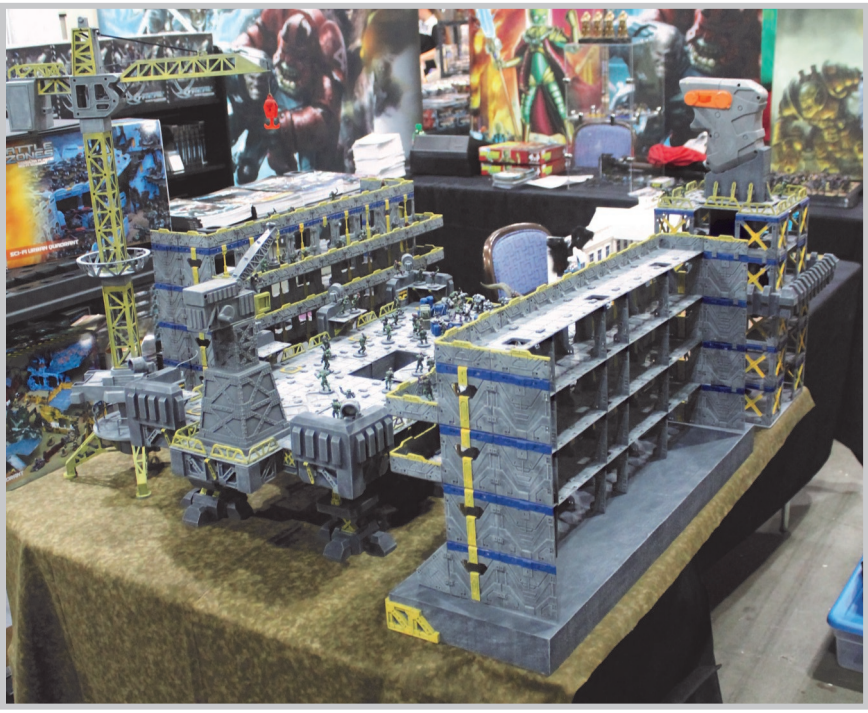
'And what of him?'

'Commander, I am sorry to inform you, he has shot himself.'

Augustus and Celeste met Rylor in a specialized Enforcer hospital, where the Council's wounded could recover without fear of media intrusion. Rylor had been placed in an isolated ward, the rank of First Recon and the possible questions that needed asking requiring privacy and discretion.

As the Commander and Captain entered, Rylor looked across to the door and turned to what he had been doing before the interruption, staring at the clinically-white ceiling. It was the same shade of clinically-white as Gamma Tau.

'They never jam. You know that? Fifteen years of service, and they never jammed. Not once,' said Rylor. Celeste noted his entire body was taut, tightened, a similar tension to the that he had exhibited during



Warpath battlefield at Adepticon 2015, courtesy of Mantic Games

interrogation. 'And the fact they never jammed saved my life numerous times,' Rylor continued with prompting. 'I'd seen it happen, you know? A weapon jam, last moment, meant you got killed instead of your target.' He did not look at them as he spoke, but continued to stare at the ceiling above.

'What happened?' asked Augustus.

Rylor didn't respond.

'What happened, Rylor?' Augustus repeated. 'Pistol jammed and backfired. Took off my ear.' Rylor half-heartedly lifted a hand and gestured to the bandage that was wrapped around the right side of his face without looking.

Still he averted his gaze.

'But saved your life,' said Celeste

Rylor closed his eyes.

'Think of your daughter, Rylor. She has already lost a mother. Don't make her an orphan,' said Celeste, leaning forward and placing her hands on the metal railing of his bed. 'You have been granted the Council's own approval to keep her. Do not waste such a gift.'

'Because I helped kill her mother. How can I tell her? How can I even look at her?' he asked, a numbness in his voice that sounded nothing like the soldier Augustus and Celeste had fought beside.

The Commander was in no mood to indulge self-pity. 'You are an Enforcer. You find a way, or make one. You have survived worse than this. And you will survive this, also. Suicide is but a permanent solution, to temporary problems.'

Celeste touched the side of his face, ran her fingers over the bandage where the stimulants were knitting the flesh back together and rebuilding his ear.

'All things pass, Rylor. This too, will pass,' she whispered.

Rylor thought of Annika. Of who she was, and had been. And of how his daughter would never be able to know. Annika had been removed and erased from all records. Like the planet of her death, her existence had been expunged. And to her daughter, flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood, she would remain nothing more than a faint memory, a ghost, perhaps partially remembered sometime in the distant future when a child had grown and smelt the

Reb Strider by Paul Mullis

perfume her mother once wore. The smell would be comforting, but his daughter would not know the reason why. Perhaps a flash of hair or a smile on a stranger would one day awaken a distant and dim memory of infancy, but the image would be hazy, blurred, beyond reach. No. His daughter, she would never know.

And Rylor would never be able to speak of it. And from the legendary First Recon, tears emerged.

* * *

Celeste gazed over the city, the kaleidoscope of colors washing over her. She could see her family name emblazoned in neon letters across one of the tallest towers, and felt the pull of a smile.

She was glad to be back. But she couldn't stay for long. She never could. None of them could. It was one of the first things that was learnt as an Enforcer – you can never go home.

Many of the soldiers she knew had trouble returning. It was the same for all of them; on the battlefield, they longed for home, longed to return. And when they did, those who survived, all anyone wanted to do was get back out there. Here, at home? People lied. People cheated. There were billions upon billions and each and every single one trying to make their own way. But there… out there, with your brothers and sisters, every Enforcer knew where they belonged. Any one of them would risk their life to save another, and knew that the same would be done for them. In that heat of battle, a kinship is forged that can never be found anywhere else.

Coming home, you didn't know where you belonged. How could anyone replicate that feeling? How did you find your place in the middle of so many?

No matter what an Enforcer did when they came home – they experienced the memories of their deployment every day. In every touch and gesture they saw two lives; the life they lived now, and the life out there, beyond the horizon, on foreign soil. Their hands would hold their children, and they would recall the touch of a weapon. They would hear a firework from a carnival, and some part of them felt the force of a grenade. They would see aliens, welcoming them at home, identical to the ones who had shot and killed their friends.

And they lived with this, every moment, of every day.

Celeste traced the vine of tattooed roses on her arm, each petal a comrade she had lost.

She did not know one Enforcer who would not do it all again.

Even Rylor.▪

Enforcer Pathfinder on Monocycle by Chris Schlumpberger

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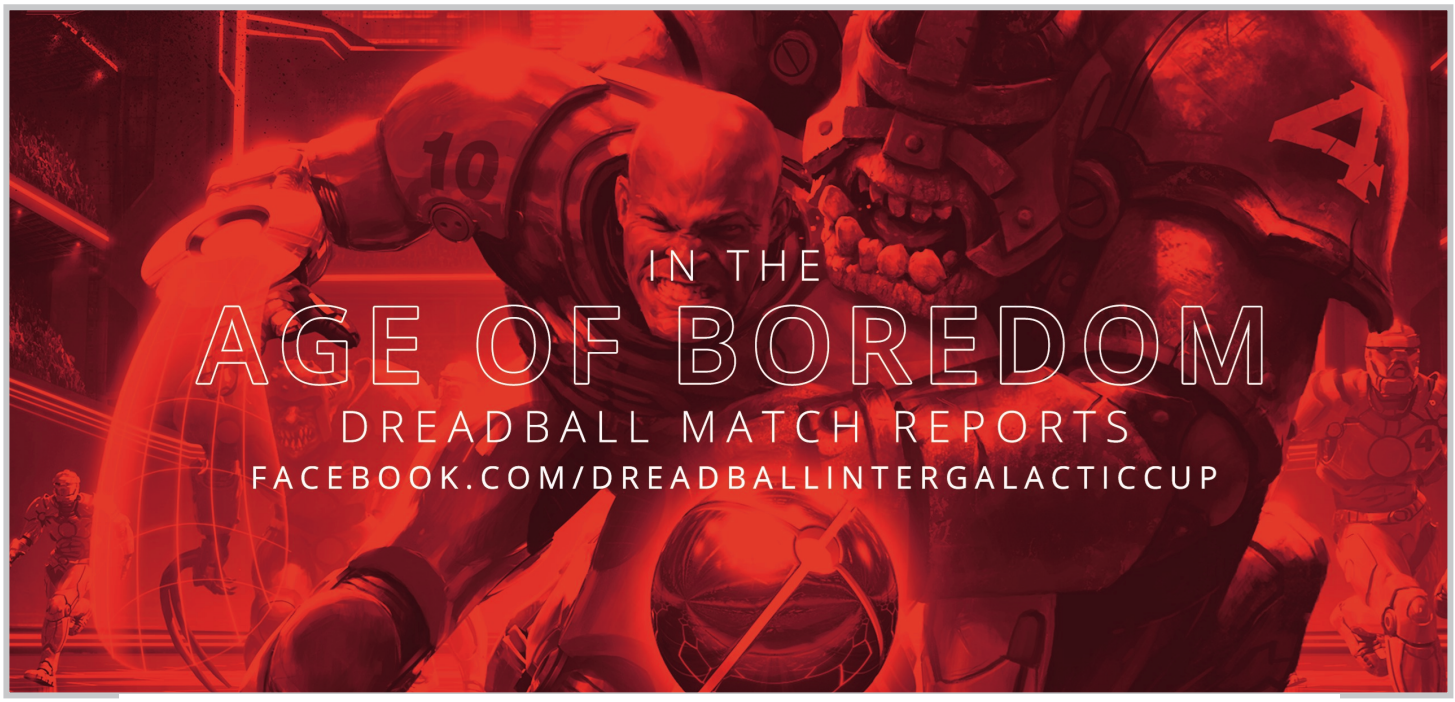

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